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ABSTRACT

Noting the scarcity of readily available information about men in child care and early education, this handbook is designed to support and nurture men in the profession, to provide information to men considering the profession, and to inform administrators and others regarding recruiting, retaining, and dealing with the issues of men in child care and early education. The handbook is organized in four parts. Articles in part 1 address issues related to the entry of men in the field of early childhood education and care, including attitudes of directors, recruitment, and hiring practices. Articles in part 2 focus on the unique challenges faced by men in the field, including dealing with accusations of child abuse and professional isolation. Articles in part 3 concern retaining men in early childhood education and care programs. The articles are: (1) "Entering the Field: One Man's Perspective" (Steven Petznich); (2) "My Second Career Is Child Care" (John Suur); (3) "Policy Officer to Kindergarten Teacher: A Career Change" (Paul Tennyson); (4) "'I Want to Be a Preschool Teacher, So Now What Do I Do?'" (Bruce Cunningham); (5) "The Culture in Early Childhood Education and the Preparation of Male Teachers" (Kelvin Seifert); (6) "A Survey: Attitudes of Directors Towards Men" (Tom Masterson); (7) "Recruiting Men to Child Care" (Bruce Sheppard and Bryan G. Nelson); (8) "Hiring a Man: Employment Practices" (Bryan G. Nelson and Bruce Sheppard); (9) "Innocent or Guilty: Dealing with Accusations of Child Abuse" (Coleman Baker and Durwood Collier, Jr.); (10) "Working Conditions and Money" (National Child Care Study); (11) "Isolation: Where Are All the Other Men?" (Bruce Sheppard); (12) "Solutions: A Rural Perspective" (Steve Weber); (13) "Keeping Men in Your Program" (Bruce Sheppard); (14) "Organizing Men in Your Area" (Bruce Sheppard and Bryan G. Nelson); (15) "Common Questions about Men in Child Care" (Bruce Sheppard and Bryan G. Nelson); and (16) "One Conclusion" (Bryan G. Nelson). Some articles contain references. Appended is a list of children's books depicting male teachers and a list of 34 resources. (KB)

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Men in Child Care & Early Education

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A Handbook for Administrators & Educators

PS 030935

Number 1

Edited by:
Bryan G. Nelson, RN
Bruce Sheppard, MTS

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A Handbook for Administrators & Educators.
Number 1
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This handbook was partially funded by a National Association for the Education of Young Children Membership Action Grant. The rest of it came out of our pockets.

All proceeds from this book will go to continue funding the work of Men in Child Care Project. Mailings, brochure productions and long distance telephone calls. We will also put money collected towards scholarships for retreats and conferences for men that can't afford to attend.

The contents and views presented reflect the work of each author and do not necessarily represent the position of the National Association for the Education of Young Children nor Men In Child Care or the editors.

Men in Child Care & Early Education:
A Handbook for Administrators & Educators
Number 1

Contributors
Coleman Baker
Durwood Collier, Jr.
Bruce Cunningham
Tom Masterson
Bryan Nelson
Steven Petznich
Kelvin Seifert
Bruce Sheppard
John Suur
Paul Tennyson

This book is dedicated to David Giveans.
David is the man who started the Men's Caucus at the NAEYC conference.
If he hadn't been a pioneer, we probably wouldn't be doing this book.
May his influence in life be remembered after his death in March 1991.

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I'd also like to thank the many people who have taken the time to write me about their work with child care. Men and women from all over the United States, Canada, Australia, and Great Britain. Also those that attended the retreats, luncheons and the conferences. Dedicated hard working men.

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And finally, my parents, Ron and Charmaine. Both gave me lots of time to play – something I love to do.

Bryan G. Nelson

First of all I would like to thank my wife Carla Christensen for her support during my work on this project. I would also like to thank my farsighted seminary eduators who first exposed me to early childhood education 20 years ago.

And finally I would like to thank all of the men and women I have met who have asked the critical questions, provided the essential information, and given the strong support that helped make this handbook possible.

Bruce Sheppard

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Introduction

by Bruce Sheppard & Bryan G. Nelson

We are writing this book because we wanted to get information out to people about men in child care and early education. It's the results of over ten years of information gathering, workshops, seminars, newspaper articles and discussions.

We wrote this book with three purposes in mind.

1. Support and nurture men in the profession to keep them in and active.

2. For men considering being in the profession. A good resource to put in the hands of a man considering the profession.

3. Resource for administrators, boards of directors, career counselors, and educators providing information about recruiting, retaining and dealing with the issues of men in the profession. A manual for deciding about having men in your program and a text for classroom instructors.

The inspiration for creating this handbook comes from the retreats, conferences, workshops and lunches we have planned, attended and presented over the past ten years. Since 1981, we have presented and held men's luncheons at the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children conferences. Since 1985, we have led the Men's Caucus at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conference. In that same year, we also started the Midwest Men In Child Care annual winter retreat.

As we began this project, we envisioned a simple, modest document that would deal with a half dozen issues in child care. As we talked with more people and received more questions we decided to expand the scope of this project. We applied and received a small Membership Action Grant from NAEYC in 1990.

Because both of us work full time we have been devoting our spare time towards the Men In Child Care project and this handbook. To start with, we looked at the literature available (see the bibliography at the end of this book). There has been articles and research written about men, (the earliest we found was 1966), but, none of them really answered the questions we were being asked.

We brought our idea to the Winter Retreat and the Male Caucus. Two events that we coordinate every year. We asked what people wanted to know and we either wrote a chapter ourselves or asked others to write.

For men considering entering the field, we have men writing about their experience. If you wanted to know what to do if you were new to the field, we have a professor from a midwestern school tell us what one needed to do. For child abuse, we have two social services professionals talk about what they are doing in their state. We've included information about the National Child Care Study from California for information about salaries and working conditions.

If you look at the table of contents you'll see some aspect of child care covered. However, let's be honest about this: there is no way that we could have put together everything you want to know about men and early childhood education. First, we don't know everything there is (though the children we teach think we do) and second, we would never get this handbook out if we attempted to include everything. Our grant said we would a year ago!

What we have is a collection of our thoughts. We also have provided a place for other people's information, thoughts, feelings and beliefs. This book was possible by their both men and women's contributions.

Speaking of women. Our best supporters are women. We never would have made it in this field without the support of intelligent women.

Who should read this handbook? It's intended for anyone with an interest in men working with young children. We are writing this book to connect with men that work with children. Men that love and care about children and spend most of their day nurturing, caring, playing, laughing, singing, teaching, washing, and raising young children. It's also for the administrator or woman who wants to support men working with those young children.

If you have a particular issue or question that has not been adequately dealt with here, let us know. If you have more information or personal experiences that could help us cover a particular issue better, write an article and send it to us. It is our hope that ever two or three years we can put together a new edition that presents the latest, up-to-date information. With your help, we'll be able to do it.

Bruce Sheppard
Bryan G. Nelson
October 1992

Part 1

Overview: Men entering the field or "Why would you want to be in child care?

by Bryan G. Nelson & Bruce Sheppard

The best reason to become a child care professional is because of a love of learning and a love of playing. What other profession can one get paid to explore the world through the eyes of a child, or rediscover language as a young child begins to learn to talk. We assembled this handbook because we love working with young children and want other men to have the opportunity we have. It won't be easy, but, it will be rewarding. If you are a man reading this, hopefully you identify with some of the stories or they'll provide some helpful information. If you are a decision maker and are wondering what to do about male involvement, we can assure you that men working with children is not something new. We've been caring for children since the 1970's.

Why work with children?

About eight years ago, Bryan got a grant to produce a brochure about men in child care. It took him a while to figure out what we would say to people. On the one hand, he wanted to tell men that child care is a great profession. Working with young children is exciting and invigorating But, he also wanted to warn men that there would be some difficulties. Low pay, hard hours and low status. This is what he wrote back then:

"Men build bridges, send people to the moon, and perform delicate eye surgery. Yet rarely mentioned, but equally as important, men also care for young children. Fathers, brothers, uncles and grandfathers have been doing it for generations. As child care professionals, men are doing it now; full time as a career: changing diapers; teaching art; demonstrating dance."

The brochure went on to say:

"Any career you enter will have stereotypes and expectations. Child care is no different. There's a pull in our society to conform to certain standards. "Real men" resist this pull and set their own standards. Through our work, and our high standards, we are helping to set the foundation for everything a child does in his or her lifetime. The block towers in our classrooms can be the

beginnings of a future carpenter's skills for bridges. Rocket ships flying past our legs could be piloted by our next generation of astronauts. And, a child's cutting out of paper figures are the skills needed by future surgeons. As male child care professionals, we help these things happen daily during the formative years of a child's life. We extend the care and the role models provided by parents at home."

How do men get in child care?

Consider how men enter the early childhood profession. Take the editors of this book for example. Bryan needed a job while taking some time off from college to be in Europe. He found one as a "Manny", (a male nanny). An unusual job, but, because he had worked at a summer camp overseas, the parents knew him already. When he returned to the United States he needed a job, so remained in the child care profession and became a child care teacher.

While studying for the ministry in a seminary Bruce was placed in a Head Start for the summer by the seminary in order for him to gain experience with urban, low income, and people of color. Five years later when he left church work he found a position in a child care center as an assistant teacher and has been with early childhood now for 11 years.

Over the past ten years, we've asked our friends why they got in child care. We also put together a questionaire that we've been distributing and collecting. Many of our questionnaire respondents have related similar stories to our own. Michael Kauper of Minneapolis has been a child care provider for over 20 years now, but it has not always been that way. While working on his doctorate in physics at the University of Minnesota he became involved with a woman who was doing family child care in her home. As he spent more and more time with her and the children in her care he was finding that he was enjoying being with the children more and more and working on his degree less and less. Over several years he finally came to the conclusion that being with the children was what he really wanted to do with his life and dropped his studies in physics. He has been business partners with that same woman now for 20 years.

Decision based on economics

Warren Knipfer of Rochester, Minnesota has a career as a child care teacher; it wasn't his first. He had a previous career in engineering and like many other men during corporate cutbacks, he was laid off. Shortly after the birth of their second child, Warren and his wife decided that it was important for one of them to stay home with the children until they were old enough for school. They thought opening a family home child care would be a good way for one of them to stay home with the children and earn some extra money.

When it was decision time it turned out that Warren's wife had recently received a promotion and her job brought in more money than Warren's and her career track held more opportunities for growth and income. Warren welcomed the

chance to spend more time with the children so he opened the family child care. By the time their second child entered school, the job market was better so that he could have gone back to engineering, but, Warren had enjoyed the child care experience so much that when they decided to close their home child care Warren took a job as a teacher in a local child care center.

For the good of the world

Besides the basic need for a job, another common way men enter the early childhood profession is for "humanitarian concerns." Experience in another educational field or some experience in social work lead some men to enter child care to effect, what many men referred to as, "real change" in the lives of children and the world.

Rick Gravrock of Minneapolis, Minnesota began a career in child care because he became angry about the abuse and neglect of children. He sees children as "our greatest hope" and wants to be a part of nurturing that hope in children. Steve Weber of Hillman, Minnesota loves children. He wanted to continue that joy he feels when he gets to see them make new discoveries so he earned his Masters in the field. Another respondent, John Gunnarson of Woodacre, California entered the field to effect real change in the world and like Steve Weber feels children are such a joy to be with.

It can be difficult, as an adult male to explain to someone why it is a joy to be with children. There is something refreshing rediscovering the world through children's eyes and their experiences. The work isn't for everyone. But, as a man, you will never know unless you try. The advantage of child care right now, is that it doesn't require extensive training to try it out before investing time and money for education. The best way we can suggest is to substitute teach.

Do you need a job?

Child care centers and homes always need good substitute aides, assistants and teachers to work with children. As long as you look presentable and have a good work reference without criminal arrest record, just about any center or home will be willing to give you a try. Be aware that some child care programs are suspicious of men. However, because of anti-discrimination laws, legally you cannot be rejected based on your gender. We'll talk more about this issue later.

How much can I make?

Substitute pay is poor and the work is spotty so if you want to make something of it, it's better to get on the substitute list of several places. The big advantage of this method is that you need not invest a lot of time and money in education, training, or equipment to find out if you want to get in the field. Another advantage is that substitute work sometimes leads to job offers of full-time work. However, most find it nearly impossible to make a living solely as a substitute child care worker.

Another good way to start is to ask around at the centers in your

area and find some men in the field to talk to. Most men are very willing to lend their experience and advice to another man considering the field. Volunteering is another good way to check things out, provided you have a source of outside income. Be warned though: Bryan remembers one program where he worked having a man come in to ask if he could volunteer. After the man left, his coworkers looked at each and said, "That man is crazy if he thinks we'll let him near our children." Whether you believe this type of attitude is justified or not, be prepared for intense scrutiny. If you have nothing to hide and you have good references, you will be able to work with young children.

To get a good job...

I remember my first experience working as a volunteer at a child care center near my school. I spent all afternoon running around with the children. I was exhausted and didn't go back for a week. If I had had a class or a mentor to explain how to mix active games with quiet activities, it would have been much easier. There are many colleges, technical schools, adult education departments of public schools, and early childhood associations that offer classes and workshops not only during the day but at evenings and weekends. Many of these offerings are a good way to find out what is going on in early childhood education. Similarly, attending a state, regional, or national Association for the Education of Young Children or Education Association convention will give you a better sense about the profession.

At some point, if you are serious about working in child care you'll need to decide to be a head or lead teacher, assistant teacher, aide, driver or even cook. In one of the chapters, a professor will explain what you need to do to get more education and credentialed to work with young children.

A rewarding career

As with any meaningful career, there are tremendous rewards of job satisfaction and personal development. The satisfaction of exploring and sharing discoveries with children is limited only by your creativity. As a child care professional, your personal development will include a wide range of skills and talents.

Eric Stevens, the Executive Director of St. David's said, "When I first started working in early childhood education, I was fascinated with child development, especially how young children learn. Now, as an administrator I continue to be challenged by my work with parents, staff, children and the community at large." or Todd Seabury-Kolod, a early childhood family educator, "Men, too, can create a nurturing classroom environment which is rich in the key experiences that young children require: cognitive; social; and emotional."

It's an exciting and challenging career; and a vital one for children. And as David Giveans said, "Working with children is one of greatest thing any human can do. It's a profession I have always been proud to be a part of."

Chapter 1

Entering the field: One man's perspective

by Steve Petznich

It is a very exciting time to be involved in Early Childhood Education (ECE). It is also a good time to be a male in the field. I had planned to be an elementary teacher when I first started school. I attended a small junior college, where I started as a student and athlete. Being a student/athlete makes a big difference in how one participates in school, especially as a man in early childhood education.

I was recruited to the University of Wisconsin Stout, to play basketball. At that time Stout did not offer an elementary program, but with the ECE major and a semester at another school, I could have the elementary certification. That was how I became involved in ECE. I enjoyed it so much that I have decided to stay in the field.

Being a male in ECE, has many advantages and disadvantages. I usually try to see disadvantages as advantages, to help keep things in a positive light. Here are a few issues that I encountered as a male student majoring in ECE.

You are known in ECE as soon as you walk in the door. For my first ECE class I remember going into a classroom with about eighty people and only two were males. I sat in back for most of my classes to try not to be noticed; pretty hard to do. We started out by singing a song; something I do now just about every day. At that time I really wondered what I had gotten myself into. My male voice stuck out like a sore thumb, and even though I enjoy singing, I felt uncomfortable. There were also a lot of stares as I walked in and out of classes, and that continued throughout my training.

Recognition is a big thing that can work for you or against you. Professors know if you are there or not, and they seem to remember more about what you say, simply because you stand out, good or bad. This has taught and helped me in most cases to be better prepared. You are usually asked for your opinion, because you are male, the minority.

Just a male presence in the classroom is a reminder that men can be teachers too! The assumption is that all teachers are female, yet with a man sitting in the class somehow the class must now accommodate males. This was evident in the classes I attended. I would see female instructors changing in mid-sentence to acknowledge my presence in the classroom. I didn't notice it as much in male instructors, because it was taught from a male perspective. It is very important that females realize that there are some special dynamics for males in the field. I am sure it is much the same way for female students with male instructors. Notice that this is just an observation and may not be the actual truth.

For me, being an athlete helped because it worked to break down the misconceptions and typical beliefs about males in this major. It is very important for people to know that one can be a masculine athlete and a nurturing teacher; I feel it is a good combination. Males need to get away from using excuses like, there are a lot of females in the major, or it is easy, rather than the real fact that they enjoyed working with young children.

There are many issues that I feel have given the ECE field a bad image. One thing that I have always had a problem with is that most people think that all we do in child care is babysit. They do not understand the magnitude of what we actually do. Even after explanations they still say, "so what you are doing is babysitting". So I talk about curricular and skill development, sound guidance practices, and different ways of promoting self growth.

Another issue is the ridiculous wage that people in the field receive. Because it is viewed as a paraprofessional and a so called "mothering" job, the wage rate is very low. Bringing males into the ranks will probably help to increase starting salaries and bring more prestige to the profession.

There is one more issue that I would like to address. Women always mention that males tend to move through the ECE ranks faster than women. I feel that they move males toward the administrative responsibilities because it is a traditional male role. But if you notice, this moves the males away from contact with children because it is not a traditional male role. This is too bad, because the children need this male role model in the classroom.

Being a male in this major is a positive influence that works not only in the college classroom, but more importantly in the classrooms we will be teaching in. We have the ability to provide positive role models that young children can relate and look up to.

Steve Petznich is currently working on his Masters degree in Early Childhood Education at the University of Wisconsin - Stout and is the head teacher of the Child and Family Studies Center. He is also assistant basketball coach at the university.

Chapter 2

My second career is child care

by John Suur

A year ago I was a senior lawyer for the International Monetary Fund, one of the "Gnomes of Washington". Every day, I had to make decisions affecting how hundreds or thousands of people in the Third World made their livings. I had a huge office with a view of the Potomac River, a secretary who looked after all my work needs, guaranteed admission to the Executive Dining Room, and first class tickets for my infrequent travels. Now, as a part-time child care assistant, my pay is near the minimum wage, my work uniform is sneakers and T-shirts instead of three-piece suits, and my clients are kids. Every day I get to decide on snacks, songs to sing, and how to settle playground squabbles. I feel much more rewarded now.

Why, you may ask. I feel more useful, I reply. Money and power are great when you can't get a roof over your head or the next meal, but after that they're a poor substitute for love and a real stake in the future. When taken to extremes, money and power lead to abuses of both, a splintering of the human spirit, as with the Nazi concentration camp guards who tortured prisoners at work then came home to be good family men. Money and power in a government or corporate bureaucracy often come from cultivating the bosses, rather than helping the people the bureaucracy's suppose to help. The "clients" easily become statistics on a chart, mainly there to be manipulated to prove what a good job you're doing.

Child care, in contrast, is very immediate and down to earth. You need to concentrate with your whole self on the needs of the complete human being who stands before you, entrusted to your care. A child's bumped knee, or her sudden discovery that written letters are connected with the noises that they represent, focus all your attention on the child in a way that helps. Similarly, giving a child the words to express his feelings may or may not settle a particular playground squabble, but it may give him the means to deal with much more substantial conflicts for the rest of his life. When I help a child learn that the world is a

friendly place, that he can keep himself out of harm's way, and that he's worthy in himself, I feel that I'm really being useful to humanity. The effects of my work are both immediate–in a smile through tears, or a discovered talent–and long term, in part of a generation better able to cope with what lies ahead.

A child care worker spends much of the time on the floor, dealing with children at their level, noticing things that most adults have lost the vision to see. Not just bugs and pennies dropped on the sidewalk; kids usually read and interpret nonverbal signs of feelings and moods much better than their elders. It's only unobservant adults who see children as empty personalities, waiting for life to fill them in. In child care, you begin to understand and admire the quirks of each young personality, the unique way each person meets the daily problems of living and growing. You translate the world to the child, and the child to the world. It's one of the few jobs around where love is an essential part of the job description.

Changing from bureaucrat to child care assistant was easy for me. My daughters' college educations had been paid for, my wife has satisfying work, and I had an opportunity for early retirement with a pension I felt I could live on. The minimum training requirements for the new profession were easily met, though obviously I was far behind those my age who had started out in child care. As I am also a lawyer, I can return to some legal practice as a financial safety net if our new family income can't pay the bills. I chose part-time status because I can sustain its reduced physical demands longer, and maintain my second career until I'm no longer able to squat down on the floor with the kids. With my remaining work time I can write and lobby for young children in general, because the world needs to understand its next generation just as much as the reverse.

My age and gender are impediments to some parts of the profession, but as a relative pioneer in both these areas I get much support from people that matter. I don't yet have the creaky joints of old age that would keep me from getting on the kids' level, but my memory ain't what it used to be and my handwriting will never be a positive example for the children. Some aspects of the profession are harder to learn than others when your own children have grown: you tend to forget the timing and sequence of their growth, and you need to re-educate yourself about how to help children grow at each stage of development. These newfangled diapers may be easier to put on, but it takes some training to do it the prescribed way. I am told that child care workers often suffer more communicable diseases in the first few years than the general population, as immunity builds up to the children's common illnesses; however, my own health has improved since I changed careers.

In the last few years, several organizations that train retired people to find work in child care have sprung up around the nation. for instance, Grandcare™, in Montgomery

County, Maryland, trains retirees without charge for work as substitutes or part-time assistants in 30 local child care centers. I had done most of my formal training by the time I found out about Grandcare™, but I attended their one-week course and benefited from their career advice. Perhaps something similar could be found or established in other communities.

As one of the three percent of males in a female-dominated profession, I sense that some parents and teachers may regard me as potentially a "dirty old man" until my conduct proves otherwise. Although statistics and my convictions show that concern to be unwarranted, I accommodate to it by ensuring that I am part of a teaching team and rarely, if ever, alone in a room with a child. Sometimes my gender gets in the way of my communications with my co-workers, but the good humor and common goals of the workplace easily overcome these difficulties. Studies have shown that children thrive better when cared for by both sexes than by women alone.

Caring for children in a group is also different than raising your own child. When my daughters were young, we didn't have any system for raising them; we just loved them and did what seemed natural at the time. We made many mistakes, as all parents do, and we had our share of conflicts as each girl needed to have resistance in order to assert and sense the independence of her own personality. Other parents' children, however, are with you for only a relatively small part of the day and an even smaller part of their lives. As a care-giver you cannot substitute for or compete with a parent. Instead, you need to introduce the world away from home to the child in a way that will help the child grow to be as capable and caring as the child's own inner being and the rest of her life permits. A care-giver needs to be less partial to the child than the parent. You give because you want to give, not because that child is of your flesh.

Finally, a group of young children the same age is very different than a family setting, particularly for children who are just beginning to develop language and other social skills. A care-giver in a center has less time for one-on-one interactions than a parent, and the children in a center need to be encouraged to learn to interact more with each other. Conflict management skills developed in preschool tend to last a lifetime, and studies have shown that good preschools make better citizens.

The need for men in child care is great and growing. With most men and women in the work force, most children are cared for outside the home. Child care centers and family day care homes operate at or over capacity, and many children take care of themselves at home for long before they should. Given the terrible pay, child care workers are hard to come by and quick to quit. Men are in very short supply in the profession, even though many children desperately need male role models other than the caricatures, rock musicians, and superheros they see on the television screen. Only a man can show a young boy that he can be-

come a caring, peaceful man if he wants to.

The rewards of child care are as great as they are immediate. Playing with children every day restores your zest for living, your sense of humor, your perspective on people, your creativity, your flexibility, your physique, and your sense of being appreciated for who you are. Young children often give their elders far more love than they receive from them, and they have a natural empathy that is often destroyed in later years. Young children catch on quickly and grow very fast, so that each day you may witness some evidence of accomplishment. Other child care workers are unlikely to be consumed by ambition and greed, so they can be delightful company. As a group, they are among the most practical, creative people I have met. Child care work is close to nature, both human nature and the world we live in. For a man wanting to leave the world a better place than it was when he came here, child care offers a heritage that is sure to outlive the caregiver, a path to a better future.

So, if you are approaching an age when you can get a pension that will meet your basic needs, my advice to you is: Look toward the floor; the future is there, needing your love.

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Chapter 3

Police officer to kindergarten teacher: A career change

by Paul Tennyson

At the age of 33, I decided to change careers and return to school to obtain my degree in early childhood education. I was well aware that this degree program was predominantly female students and instructors. Going into a traditionally female profession as a non-traditional student added to the apprehension I was feeling about returning to school. I was concerned that I would have a difficult time adjusting to a college schedule, while at the same time determining where I would fit in when most of my fellow students would be female and much younger than I.

The most difficult day was the first day when I attended a freshman level class. I felt as if I stood out, and rightfully so. I was the lone male in a classroom full of females, and the only non-traditional student. I have a tendency to attempt to blend in with the crowd until a routine and a niche is found. That was impossible in this case. My discomfort worsened when the instructor began the class by having us sing a song. I received many sideways glances and noticeable smiles as my voice stood out among the chorus of female voices. This may have been the true test of whether or not I belonged in this field. The child care and early childhood educator spends a major amount of time singing in their careers, so it should become second nature to them. Upon reflection on this incident, I want to stress that I have never felt as though I was being laughed at during my years as a student. In that first class, it was more a feeling of novelty at having a male singing in the classroom. That feeling has followed me throughout my educational career. Yes, I stood out, but after the first few weeks of school, I became acquainted with many of my fellow students, and many of those acquaintances have turned into close friendships.

The curriculum for me as a non-traditional student was, at times, very challenging - not because it was so far above my level of understanding, but more to my having experienced more of life than students who were much younger than I was. The curriculum must be structured to

meet the needs of the majority of students, those between the ages of 18 - 24 years of age. While there were times when I was frustrated at the seeming simplicity of some classes, I was able to gain valuable information by taking them. Classes which are required in the major study areas had no options for "testing out", nor were there any credits given for "life experiences". For the most part, I feel that this is a wise decision on the part of the university because a review of previous information never hurts, and I found that all of my classes provided me with new information which turned out to be quite valuable.

Some of my instructors were still teaching with a stereotypically female emphasis, and from a female perspective. One of the things which I was able to provide was my perspective - a nontraditional student who is also a father of two young children (ages five and seven), and as a husband who benefited from the unique opportunity to stay home with my children as a full time father for nearly two years. My opinions were not only openly accepted, but were even sought after. I not only benefited from the material presented in class, I was also able to share my view from a male perspective which would have been missing from classes without my presence.

I have at times heard that a male in the child care field is either "unstable", or "unable to make it in any other field", so they are attempting to make it in this one. I have found that my fellow male students are pleasantly open people who truly care about teaching children. I have also found that as males, we have been readily accepted by the majority of our female peers as equal partners in this field. Many of the parents of the children I have worked with in the classroom have made it a point to tell me they are glad to have a male role model for their children - especially the parents of male children. It gives the children a totally new perspective about the differing roles a male can have. Male teachers can do the same things as female teachers - we can even sing!

The novelty of being a male can also work against you. Many young children, even as late as the third grade, have never had a male teacher. For some of these children, suddenly having a male in their classroom can be very troublesome. It takes patience and an understanding of these children to help them accept a male as a teacher. It may require that the male teacher allow the child, who is more comfortable with a female teacher, to maintain a distance until the child determines it's safe enough for a closer relationship.

There are other possible contributing factors why some children may be uncomfortable with males, such as a poor relationship at home with their father, or no relationship at all with males due to the absence of a father in the home. Initially, I found the tendency of some children in my classes to stay away from me as a failure on my part. It would be a mistake to view this as a failure, but should be viewed as an opportunity. The role males play in this situation should be to let the child get to know

you and accept you on their terms, not your terms. Your demeanor may have a significant impact on their perception of males. As more males enter the child care and early childhood education field, children will have more opportunities to accept men as teachers at an earlier age. The traditional predominance of females in early childhood programs has resulted in the expectation that the teachers will be female. When the unexpected male is in the classroom, we must allow time for the students to adjust.

One of the last areas I would like to address as a non-traditional male in the field of early childhood education is my demeanor as a student. I had earlier made mention of my search for a niche. One of the discoveries I made is that my niche is who I am as a person. If I were to try to be someone I am not, or attempted to fit into a role I cannot fit, the result would be failure. When I entered this field, I felt very comfortable working with children, and most other adults. My success comes from maintaining my identity as a person, and not trying to fit into the world of the traditional college student. The idea that you can "never go back" applies here. My acceptance by other students did not occur because I tried to fit in. It came precisely because I maintained my identity. In my opinion, people will more easily accept you if they know who you are, so be yourself.

This is the second time around for me in college. I have enjoyed this experience much more than the first because I truly wanted to be in school. Instead of simply trying to finish as quickly as possible, I have taken full advantage of the opportunities available to me. As a non-traditional student, my perspective has changed about the value of learning because I can better appreciate the information as it applies to real life settings, and therefore it has more meaning for me. My return to school has been hard work, but it has been well worth the effort.

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Chapter 4

"I want to be a teacher, so now what do I do?"

by Bruce Cunningham

So you are interested in working with young children but you are not quite sure how or where to start. Well, the field of Early Childhood Education is broad with many rewarding career opportunities for men. For example, it is possible to work with children in settings ranging from family homes, to child care centers, to public schools, to recreational facilities. In addition to these settings, it is possible to work with children ranging in age from infants up to eight years (or thereabouts) as well as culturally diverse populations living in city or rural programs, low-income or wealthy, able bodied or disabled children. The field of Early Childhood Education also has careers with different levels of responsibilities. For example, within a child care center there may be aides, teachers, head teachers and administrators. Each of these positions also require different amounts of education and experience.

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the possibilities - so start with the idea you have and gather more information. One source of information is someone who is already working with young children. Most people in the field of Early Childhood Education are glad to share what it is they do, the rewards of that particular position (as well as some of the drawbacks that any job will have), and what type of educational preparation they had.

Another source of information is an administrator of programs for young children. These people are knowledgeable about the requirements, in terms of education and experience, for different positions and positions that have different levels of responsibility.

An advisor or counselor at a high school, college or university can give you educational options. These people are knowledgeable about the educational programs that are offered in their school. When gathering information from an advisor or counselor be sure to ask the following questions:

- What kinds of courses will I be required to take?

- How are classes scheduled (for example, during the day, during the evenings, on weekends or during the summer)?
- Can courses be taken by correspondence?
- Will this schedule work for me?
- How much will this program cost me in terms of tuition, fees, books, and other expenses?
- What sources of financial aid are available (for example, scholarships, grants, loans, work/study programs)?
- How long will it take me to complete the program?
- Will any other classes or experience I have already had substitute for any of the required courses? Can I 'test out' of some of the courses?
- If I change my mind about what I would like to do, can I transfer to another school?
- Does this program lead to any certification and which states or agencies recognize this certification?
- What is the placement rate of graduates? For example, do all the graduates of this program find jobs in their career area of choice or do only some percentage actually find employment?

In general, careers working with young children are increasingly requiring advanced educational preparation. A typical educational program begins with a foundation in general courses such as child development, psychology and family relationships. At this stage you will most likely do observations of children in some type of child care setting. Next, the courses become more specific and usually include child guidance techniques and ways of presenting activities, materials, or lessons. At this stage you will most likely have a laboratory or field experience where you can put the ideas presented in the courses into practice and gain hands-on experience. Finally, the courses become even more specific, and depending on the particular program, may include curriculum activities in subject areas such as math and science, or detailed techniques of working with parents. This stage usually culminates in a final student teaching or practicum experience.

So now you know about the range of career opportunities, start gathering your information. Your original career choice may change somewhat as you gather information or work on your educational preparation - but this is to be expected. There are many rewarding careers for men in child care. Get going, good luck and we are waiting for you to join us.

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Chapter 5

The culture in early childhood education and the preparation of male teachers

by Kelvin Seifert

Under current conditions, early education is more like a culture than a profession: it has distinctive customs and beliefs that are maintained over time, and that members acquire unconsciously because of certain key, but unrecognized experiences. Formal training plays a role in transmitting this culture, but at this point in history it plays a relatively minor one. As presently constituted formal study does not confer membership in the culture of early education, so much as allow individuals to visit and observe that culture. A certificate or credential lets you "try out" teaching, much as an anthropologist might visit and observe an unfamiliar society. To join early education truly and permanently individuals currently need much more than official training.

As it happens, the fate of men in early education suggests what this "much more" may consist of, and what training programs must do to become more effective. Men in this field present certain paradoxes which can be understood most parsimoniously as so incompatability between the cultural expectations of early education and the biographies of individual men. On the surface, male teachers seem much like female teachers. In the classroom the two genders behave in largely similar ways, and show many of the same personal qualities (Robinson, 1986). Yet men do not choose early education very often, even in public schools where salaries are comparable to male-dominated educational specialties. These facts are especially puzzling because leaders in the field generally hold very gender-fair attitudes, and affirm willingness to work with men in this field (Robinson, 1984). Apparently other influences are keeping men from teaching young children.

Of course, men are not totally absent in early education. But they function more as visitors and observers of the occupation, than as permanent members and active participants. This fact is sometimes obscured by the high status attributed to male contributions to the field. Men frequently become "principals" or "directors," for example; but the

prestige of these titles hides the fact that principals and directors tend to have only intermittent contacts with young children. From the perspective of truly acculturated teachers of young children, these seem like relatively marginal contributions (Biklen, 1985).

Gender differences in participation originate in the culture of early childhood education, and in how this culture meshes with the separate biographies of men and women in modern society. This article explores this idea in several ways. It begins by describing some key beliefs that sustain early educators–beliefs that function much like cultural myths. Then it describes how personal biographies cause individual early educators to acquire and sustain these myths as they gradually become more involved with young children. Finally, it points out how male and female biographies tend to differ, and how these differences facilitate female socialization into early education, but inhibit socialization for men.

These ideas have implications for how teacher trainers in early education should deal with the culture of early education. Training programs in early education certainly cannot transform the culture of early education by themselves, but they can both use it and influence it significantly. To do so, early education trainers must stop regarding students' personal pasts-- their biographies--as problems to overcome or to ignore. Instead, training must regard biography as something to focus upon: a power to be reckoned with.

Truly successful teachers of the young must become critically aware of their own pasts, and of how their pasts led them into early education, and away from other options. Male teachers, it seems, help put the importance of biography into clear relief, and offer clues about how to build better self-awareness among all teachers, male or female.

Cultural Myths of Early Education

Early education is sustained by a unique mixture of myths and practices borrowed both from family life and from conventional elementary education (Katz, 1984). Family-like qualities are plentiful. Classrooms for young children often borrow activities from home, such as cooking, sewing, and clean-up, and simulate materials from home, such as play furniture and dress-up clothing. Early education teachers are unlikely to refer to their children as pupils or students--just as children, as Jamie or Margo or Cheryl. Large amounts of time typically go to child-initiated activity, which teachers are supposed to use for learning about and responding to their children as individuals. Like other teachers, early educators consider it appropriate to vary their expectations for each child; but they often carry this attitude to lengths more characteristic of parents, dispensing almost entirely with specifying learning goals in advance of meeting and observing each particular child. Among early educators, such flexibility shows "sensitivity" or responsiveness to individual differences, rather than favoritism or lack of planning, as it might seem among teachers of older students.

But teaching the very young is not just like raising a family of one or two dozen children. Unlike parents, early educators can send their children home every day, and can ignore their children completely on weekends. And no matter how diverse and flexible their educational goals, most early educators can safely neglect certain needs and interests of their children. Except for singing, for example, musical performance skills are often slighted, simplified, or omitted. So is education about religion, sexuality, and ethnic culture (Greenberg, 1985). Unless a program is explicitly created to deal with these topics, teachers of the young often claim inability to teach these areas, or consider them too controversial, or feel that in principle they are more appropriately handled by parents themselves.

The most important difference between early educators and "real" parents, though, are their relationships to later schooling: Parents and teachers both want educated children; but only teachers feel responsible for introducing children to classroom life. Fulfilling this responsibility calls for more emotional detachment from children than parents usually possess. This happens because learning about classroom life requires experience with peers who are officially, "equals." Getting along with peers, in turn, calls for renouncing intimacy with the teacher, and for periodic lessons in "fairness." Children must experience taking turns in using materials, or in enjoying the teacher's attention.

Behaving like a combined parent and teacher has both good and bad consequences. At their best, early educators can seem amazingly likable to parents, and sympathetic to their plight. This happens because early educators "know" (or at least are supposed to know) what parents are up against in raising children, whether or not they have actually raised children themselves. At their best, too, early educators can show a welcome detachment from the more difficult behavior of certain children; and in being detached, they can sometimes remedy difficult behaviors more effectively than can a child's own parents.

But early educators can also adopt some of the less desirable traits of teachers and of (usually female) parents. At their worst, they can become so committed to interpersonal sensitivity–so "nice"–that they fail to assert their own opinions and needs even when it may be important to do so. And just as parents sometimes do, early educators may set for themselves unrealistically high standards of commitment to children. An occupational hazard is therefore self-blame: teachers may chastise themselves when children do not learn or develop as fast or as well as they first hoped.

Worse yet, early educators may actually become so committed to children as individuals that they actually interfere with children's development. This can happen, for example, when and if a particular early educator becomes convinced that only he or she understands a child properly. When this happens, it is

easy to develop significant mistrust of the "outside" world. The public school classrooms where "her" (or his) children are headed, for example, may be regarded with skepticism and general disdain; and sometimes local parents' best efforts to raise their children may become suspect (Kontos and Wells, 1986). Such mistrust can unintentionally hurt children by creating distance where rapport is sorely needed, or by implying lack of confidence in children's ability to cope with the future.

The teacher-like qualities of early educators also has mixed consequences. At best, early educators offer useful orientations to schooling, by introducing many of the social and academic routines of elementary classrooms and by initiating some of the school curriculum through a semblance of appropriate cognitively oriented activities (Entwistle, et al., 1987). Some children probably learn from these efforts, though many probably also do not. At worst, early educators risk imitating grade-school teachers too much: expecting children to sit too long in large groups, for example, or expecting children miraculously to understand abstract concepts and tasks that are supposed to "prepare" them for school, but do not (Bredekamp, 1986).

At the root of these problems is the fundamental ambiguity of early educators' role: are they parent substitute or conventional teacher? A bit of both, it seems. For fully acculturated early educators, this ambiguity poses no special problems, and may even go unnoticed. Crucial practices and attitudes of early education in fact stem precisely from combining the roles of parent and teacher. The large number of successful early educators in our society suggest that at least some people are perfectly able to forge this combination of roles into an effective career lasting literally for years.

But others do not succeed at being both parent and teacher. The reasons for differences in success and failure have something to do with the personal pasts of early educators, and with how certain common experiences in our society make joining early education easy for some individuals, but difficult or impossible for others. As it turns out, the crucial common experiences are closely tied to conventional gender roles, and also pose special problems in developing professional attitudes in early education.

Acquiring the culture of early education

Becoming an early educator starts long before enrolling in programs of formal training. Real preparation begins in childhood, in the interplay between two universal experiences, family life and schooling. Successful early educators are individuals who, for various reasons, take these two realms of experience seriously, and eventually reconcile and embody the demands of each within the same person.

Consider schooling, for example. Because North American education is compulsory, it is safe to assume that all early educators watch

teachers for years, before ever beginning formal training in early education. As others have pointed out, these observations create powerful preconceptions about he nature of teaching (Britzman, 1986), which training programs are hard put to overcome.

Preconceptions about teaching are colored by the unique perspective and cognitive capacities of childhood. Children usually only see teachers when they actually interact with a class, and rarely when they are planning educational programs or reflecting on their outcomes. And children are at best only dimly aware of the social and curricular pressures that teachers experience. They cannot see, for example, that "society" expects teachers to cover certain topics, to conduct classes in particular ways, and to avoid teaching controversial material. Childhood observers also have trouble seeing the wider context of classroom management: that organizing classes into autonomous, isolated units drives teachers to exaggerate the importance of classroom control, and to rely heavily on practices from their own childhood memories of teaching. From the perspective of childhood, teachers seem more in charge of their work than they really are, and less in need of support or help from others. All these circumstances make teaching seem attractive and powerful to children, but also rather dictatorial.

For individuals who construct this double-edged picture of teaching, family sometimes offers a welcome balance. In our society, being a child is even more "compulsory" than a student: everyone does it, like it or not. As a child, every person watches at least one adult enact the role of "parent" at close range, even if the adult does not happen to be an actual biological mother or father. In doing so, children accumulate powerful memories and opinions about how parents ought to act, and they draw heavily on these memories and opinions when they themselves become parents. As with teaching, therefore, preconceptions about parenting originate long before adulthood. They develop in early educators just as much as in anyone else.

But as with impressions of teachers, children's observations are limited by their position in the family, as well as by their still imperfect cognitive capacities. As a result, children notice the visible elements of what parents do, but not the invisible ones; they see what is, but not what might be (Ruddick, 1982). Children see, for example, that parents look after their physical needs–by cooking meals, procuring clothing, and providing nursing care. Children may sometimes enjoy these services, and sometimes complain about them. But as children, they do not really know any other way of providing physical care: do not know whether their particular parent worries too much about nutrition, for example, or not enough.

Children also notice that parents help develop children's skills and capacities ("He/She showed me how to sew/add/play hockey"). But as children, they do not know how well their own parents fulfill this role. At

one extreme parents may push skills on children–sports, music lessons, or whatever. At the other extreme parents may neglect this development, or be financially or psychologically unable to help. But children, because of their circumstances, cannot recognize these extremes for what they are. Later in life some may learn to make these distinctions, but no child can at the time it is happening.

Third, children notice that parents try to make children socially acceptable and responsible persons–by encouraging good manners and social graces, for example, or by demanding contributions to housekeeping chores, and the like. But they may not notice the confusion and anxiety that lurks behind these demands, confusion about what the world actually considers valuable. How well-mannered, really, should a child be for society to consider him or her an "acceptable and responsible" individual? Nor can children easily see parents' periodic frustration and discouragement about the demands of parenting, about life in general, or about a society that gives good economic and social support only to relatively few families (Coleman, 1987).

For some individuals, the hidden aspects of parenting do become plain later in life (Boulding, 1980); but immaturity and subordinate status obscure them from children. Overall, therefore, being a parent looks different to a child than to a parent, in spite of its familiarity to both. To children, parents look more exclusively concerned with the immediate welfare of children than they really are, and they look more confident and capable of meeting children's needs than is usually the case. Like teachers, parents seem to carry out their roles with unthinking certainty. Compared to teachers, though, parents seem to offer more nurturance and less challenge, more tutoring and fewer peers.

Early educators are just as prone to these childhood distortions as everyone else–perhaps even more so, since they are individuals who take both roles seriously. Yet training in early education rarely helps individuals to deal directly with childhood preconceptions of parents' and teachers' roles. Instead, under current conditions, early educators modify and (hopefully) correct their childhood preconceptions the same way that other people do: through a combination of luck and maturity, and in some cases through experience as parents themselves. As argued below, these naturally occurring, cultural processes do not always work well. Problems are especially likely for early educators, in fact, because early educators must develop insight about not one, but two familiar childhood roles, teaching and parenting. This dual task is not expected of most members of society, most other professions, or even most other teachers.

Male and female biographies in early education

In our society, acquiring the culture of early education is easier for girls than for boys, primarily because girls are led to attend to and acknowledge their relationships with their parents more strongly than are boys. This "female attitude" about family life is reinforced from

several directions, most of which have been reviewed elsewhere (for example, Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982, 1987; and Kaufman and Richardson, 1982). Greater concern for family also exists in society's expectations: parents and teachers expect girls to show interest in and skill with relationships, including family relationships.

Compared to boys, therefore, girls are more likely to identify with parenting roles from earlier ages, and to attend to the details of these roles more fully. But their precocious identification carries both advantages and problems. On the one hand, it helps girls to accumulate knowledge that they can later transfer to roles related to parenting, such as teaching young children. On the other hand, girls' earlier learning intensifies the distortions of childhood, described above. Girls, more than boys, bring to adulthood a belief that parents can reliably meet the challenges that children place on them, and a belief that these needs are somewhat self-evident. Only later do girls discover whether these assumptions indeed hold true in their own lives.

Gender role learning proceeds differently for boys, and the difference helps to account for boys' scarcity in early education. From very early ages and for a variety of reasons, boys gradually learn to ignore or minimize the importance of their first important nurturant relationship, usually the one with their mother. Instead, for a variety of reasons, they develop commitments to achievement and to relationships of power and hierarchy. These "male attitudes" unfold slowly; but by the time boys are old enough to think about jobs and careers, the attitudes are strong enough to color male motives and choices about work.

For early education, the results are two fold. First, most boys simple do not imagine themselves as parents very often as they grow up; or if they do, it is an idea that contains much less detail then girls' imaginings. Second, boys bring to adulthood a belief that careers can prove competence and strength, that teaching careers in particular can give these benefits, and that teaching careers do so in somewhat self-evident ways. More often than not, using parenting in these ways simply does not enter boys' thinking.

For both sexes, the distortions of childhood familiarity make teaching and schooling seem more distinct from parenting than it really is. As much as they sometimes like their teachers and principals, children are inclined to see educators as bosses and experts, and their parents as nurturers and facilitators of relationships (Docking, 1980; Everhart, 1983). This perception overstates the real differences between teachers and parents, but the perception exists nonetheless.

The perceived gap between teaching and parenting affects how easily students choose and adjust to parenting, teaching, or its hybrid, early education. The gap probably keeps the majority of children, male or female, out of early education. But it probably also affects boys more than girls, because boys lack the history of interest in parental roles that

would motivate at least some girls to reconcile the demands they see in teaching with those they see in parenting.

Support for these ideas comes from both survey research and qualitative studies. A survey of undergraduate education students, for example, found that such students do not consider male students to be as suitable for or competent in early education as female students. The bias against males exists among both sexes, but it is most pronounced among male undergraduates (Seifert, 1983). About a dozen case studies of experienced male teachers, furthermore, uniformly confirms that such men tend to doubt their own appropriateness of early education at some point in their careers (Seifert, 1987), and especially in the early stages of it.

But since these doubts are not matched by gender discrimination among professionals in the field of early education itself (Robinson, 1984), they must originate from experiences prior to entering early education. Compared to women who cope with male-dominated occupations, it seems, men in nontraditional occupations, like early education, deal less with situation-based pressures: males experience few day-to-day snubs, criticisms, and overt challenges to their competence. Instead they face more socialization pressure: more doubts, especially in their own minds, about whether they really "care enough" about young children (Schreiber, 1979).

A recent ethnographic study of Randy, a male kindergarten teacher, illustrates these ideas clearly (Seifert, 1988). Randy had taught pre-kindergarten and kindergarten for about fifteen years at the time that his teaching and personal life were investigated. At the time of the study, he was comparatively settled in his work, happy to spend five or six hours per day surrounded by young children, and highly competent at meeting their educational and emotional needs.

Yet he had not always felt so settled and committed. He had taught high school for several years before "I got the courage to face little kids," as he put it (p. 3). Even after shifting to early education, he had applied to teach high school again on two occasions, but had not followed through on these applications. At other times he had also applied for administrative positions in his school district, gone on leave to run a sporting goods store, and returned to university for graduate study. "Fortunately, none of these things worked out," he commented (p.6). All of these signs of doubt had occurred even though he reported never experiencing significant prejudice against his maleness from any teacher, parent, or administrator. His school district had actually supported his work through an unwritten, but visible policy favoring male recruitment into early education, and through good school placements once hired. What held Randy back had not been not how others treated him, but how he regarded himself, based on his own past experiences.

Awareness of the Past and Teacher Education

Randy's story suggests the power of the past in early education–a problem which others have also noted in other areas of education (Feinman-Nemser and Buchmann, 1985). His story is not meant to compare the virtues of male and female pasts, nor to imply a position about what sort of past gives the best preparation for early education. It simply suggests how the past can influence teachers' careers, and hints at how earlier experiences not only guide individuals to select certain educational specialties, but also affects their attitudes about those specialties long after they made their choices.

For most students, the personal past is probably too powerful for training programs to overcome, even if it were a good idea to do so. Instead, training in early education should simply help students to recognize the importance of the past, and how it helps create a distinctive culture of early education. By promoting awareness of the past, training may help students to gain more insight into the sources of their own teaching (Buchmann and Schwille, 1983). More insight, in turn, should help students to practice early education more sensibly, and to respond to their children's needs more, and to their own unconscious needs less.

The mechanics of developing awareness of the past can take many forms, since they must be woven into the fabric of teacher training to be effective. For some students, for example, simply writing their autobiography can develop insight about the past, and create the competence which such insight confers (Rosen, 1974). For other students, investigating the biography of an experienced teacher has proved helpful in the students' own preparation for teaching (Stevenson, 1987). Either kind of writing can take many forms, from comprehensive histories to short vignettes focused on specific teaching or personal situations.

Presumably writing about the past can and should be supplemented with dialogues about students' pasts. If taken seriously, any of these activities can foster self-respect in students for their own pasts, suggest how the past contributes to their current attitudes about teaching and parenting, and illustrate the variety of pasts that exists among students in training. However it is done, though, reconstructing the past should be treated as more than just an interesting exercise having "merely" personal relevance. It should be regarded as a significant key in developing students' knowledge of and commitment to teaching young children. If teacher-educators can accomplish these goals, they will help to free early education from the tyranny of the past, and tie it to the strength which our past lives can also offer.

Kelvin Seifert is a father, former early childhood teacher and is currently a Professor of Child Development and Early Education at the University of Manitoba. He has published many articles about gender issues as they relate to children and teachers of young children. He received his Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education from the University of Michigan in 1972.

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Chapter 6

A survey: Attitudes of directors towards men

by Tom Masterson

As a young college student taking his first job as a teacher's aide in an early childhood classroom, I often wondered what experiences other men had had in this female oriented profession. I often felt very alone and in unchartered water. But I did have a clear mission for my career. I wanted to prove that men could be competent, professional, and nurturing caregivers.

In my daily interactions with the toddlers I worked with, I sought to prove my competency to co-workers, administrators, and parents. Whether it was real or not, I perceived an eye of judgment on me. I felt that every interaction with the children would be scrutinized. I did not want to hear "see, I told you we should have hired a woman". The subtle message I was receiving was that women had a natural ability, the mothering instinct, and men needed training and practice in order to work appropriately with young children.

I also rejected the notion that the purpose of a male presence in the classroom was to "rough-house" with the children or to provide some type of "Macho-masculinity" role model to boys that was supposedly missing for families headed by single mothers.

Rather, I saw my purpose in the classroom as providing all children the role-model of a man enjoying working with children. That men and women can share equally the responsibilities of caring for young children. And, regardless of gender, any child could grow up and successfully pursue any career.

As the years passed, I still wondered what experiences other men had had in this profession. I started attending national conferences and presented local workshops to begin addressing these issues. But I was still unclear on exactly how many men were in early childhood education. I also wanted to know what center directors thought about hiring men into the field.

Thanks to a 1990 Midwest Association for the Education of Young

Children (MWAEYC) Special Projects Grant, I was able to get some answers. I was asked to chair the Men in Child Care Committee of the Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children and do a statewide survey of Ohio to:

1) Count the number of men in the profession, and;

2) Determine the attitudes held by child care center directors concerning hiring men for teaching positions.

After painstaking efforts to finalize what questions would be included in the survey, a computer list was generated of every licensed child care center in the state. Fifteen hundred surveys were mailed out. Questions were designed to cover a broad range of topics and allowed for a choice on a continuum of answers. This was done to provide more sensitive data results than a simple yes or no response.

We wanted to count as many men as possible, regardless of their professional position. We included men who worked in direct care positions (e.g. teachers, associate teachers, aides, et al.) as well as those in indirect care positions (e.g. administrators, cooks, bus drivers, et al.). Of the surveys returned, over 2,500 child care employees were counted and about 4 percent (3.9%) were male.

This number is consistent with earlier studies and includes men both as full-time teachers and part-time student aides. Even though the percentage of men in our field is small, it has remained stable. In other words, large numbers of men have neither entered nor left the professions. This is significant when we consider the impact of the McMartin trial in California in the mid-1980's. With the negative media attention given to this trial, the McMartin case alone has left a significant impact on both the public and the profession's attitudes toward the male early childhood teacher.

One of the most commonly heard reasons for not having men on staff at child care centers is that men do not apply for jobs.

Our survey asked:
Have any men ever applied for teaching positions at your center?

A surprising 111 centers out of 222 replied that yes, men had applied for these jobs. If half of the centers surveyed had at least one male applicant for a teaching position, why then were there not more men teaching. Of course, these male applicants had varying levels of education and experience. Still, such a high percentage of centers reporting male applicants suggests that there are more men interested in entering the profession.

Why many of these men applying for teaching positions were not ultimately hired probably had to do with unacceptable levels of training and experience. However, as questions 17 and 18 of the survey show, (see figure 1 & 2) it is possible that center directors may hold certain bias' toward men interacting with young children.

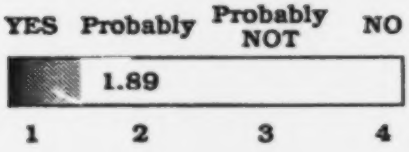


Figure 1
Questions 17 - Women inherently nurturing

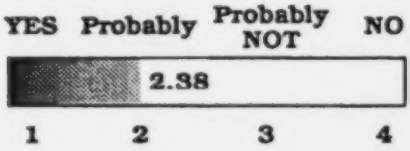


Figure 2
Questions 18 - Men inherently nurturing

These two questions (17 and 18) asked directors whether men and women both have an inherent nurturing instinct. In other words, do women have a so-called "mothering instinct" that makes them more capable of nurturing. After statistical analysis was done, the results showed a highly significant difference between answers. Directors believed women did have a natural ability to nurture children and that men failed to have this instinct. This proved to be a highly significant finding.

Whether or not directors are aware of such a bias, it still exists. For example, two survey questions (4,5) asked whether directors would "consider hiring a male for a teacher position who did not have an early childhood degree?" and whether their center had "ever hired a female for a teaching position who did not have an early childhood degree?". A t-test was done and the results (t=6.287 for 435 degrees of freedom) showed a highly significant difference between answers. That is to say, centers would not consider hiring a male without an early childhood degree even though they admitted having hired females without degrees. This too was a significant finding.

With our survey, we wanted to know if center directors would take into consideration the age of the children when hiring a male for a teaching position. This was done using a chi-square analysis 9262.29 $p<.001$. In other words, men were much less likely to be hired to work with infants than for toddlers and less likely to be hired for toddlers than for preschool age children (question 3A-F). We found fewer men in the classroom as the age range in that classroom became younger, particularly with those children still in diapers. Thus, as the ages of the children decreased, so did the presence of men.

One of the most important questions we wanted answered was whether child care centers would allow male teachers to change diapers and potty train children. As mentioned earlier, there was a statistically significant absence of men working with infants and toddlers. But we even asked those centers not currently employing men whether they would allow men to change diapers and potty train if they did employ men. A highly significant statistical difference was found in director's attitudes concerning men changing diapers and potty training versus women doing these same tasks (t=7.365 for 327df). This statistical

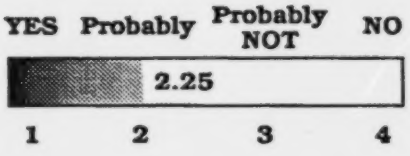


Figure 3
Question 13 - Male teachers change diapers

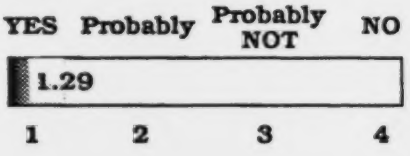


Figure 4
Question 15 - Female teachers change diapers

data represented the strongest attitudinal finding in the entire survey.

Our survey asked center directors what were their fears regarding inappropriate interaction by staff members with children. After analyzing the results, there were no statistically significant differences between fears that women would abuse or neglect the children than for men (questions 19A-22A, t=-1.4220 and 19B, t=-0.8945).

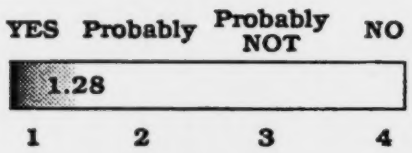
Center directors did, however, have extremely significant differences for fear of molestation of children by male teachers than for female (questions 19C-22C, t=-3.5655). They were also more fearful male teachers would play to roughly and injure children compared to female teachers (questions 19D-22D, t=-5.4820).

These fears may be a direct result of the recent McMartin trial that was so widely publicized. Center directors were asked their opinion on whether the McMartin trial has had a negative influence on the image of the male child care teacher (question 20). A total of 148 respondents replied either yes, or that the trial probably did have some degree of negative image associated with male teachers. But when asked if the trial played a part in their center's decision whether or not to have men on staff, 197 respondents claimed the trial played no part in their decision. These numbers suggest that directors believe society in general has a negative image of men interacting with young children but that the directors themselves are not affected by such attitudes.

Whether or not female directors are aware of the negative bias against male early childhood teachers, the survey results suggest they may in fact hold such attitudes. This could be one of the biggest factors why men find it hard to enter our profession. But it could also be the reason men find it harder to stay in a profession that does not even see them as competent. This has the potential to become a self perpetuating cycle that continues to result in low male involvement.

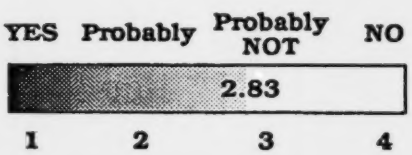
Tom Masterson is the chairperson for the Men in Early Childhood Education Committee of the Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children. He is currently serving as a Vice President of the Cleveland AEYC. Tom is also a Resource Teacher for the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) which prepares community-based child care centers for the inclusion of children with special needs.

Question 1



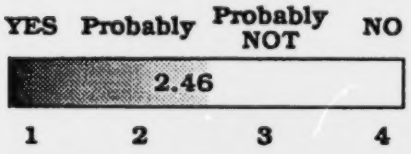
Would you consider hiring a male teacher?

Question 2



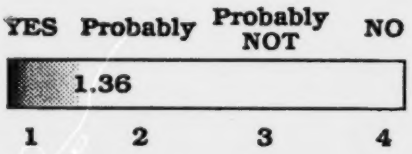
Would the age of children under his care be a consideration?

Question 3 A



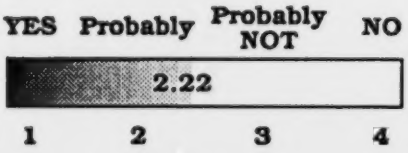
Would you consider hiring a male for: Infants?

Question 3 D



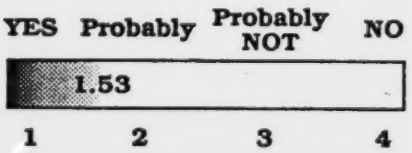
Would you consider hiring a male for: Kindergarten?

Question 4



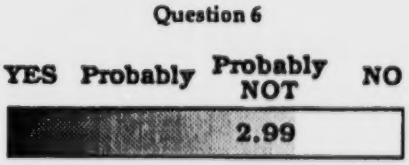
Would you consider hiring a male for a teacher position who did not have an early childhood degree?

Question 5



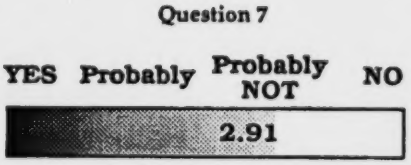
Has your center ever hired a female for a teacher position who did not have an early childhood degree?

Question 6



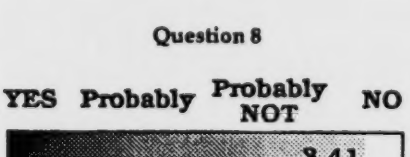
Would you consider paying a good male teacher a higher salary in order to keep him on staff?

Question 7



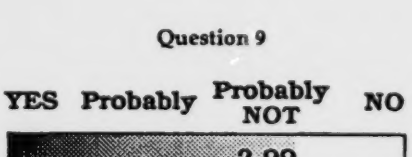
Would you consider paying a good feamle teacher a higher salary in order to keep her on staff?

Question 8



Do you think female teachers would feel uncomfortable with a male teacher on staff?

Question 9



Do you think parents would feel uncomfortable with a male teacher on staff?

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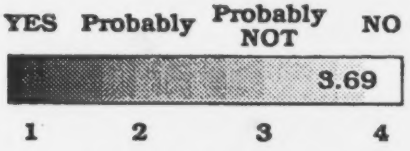
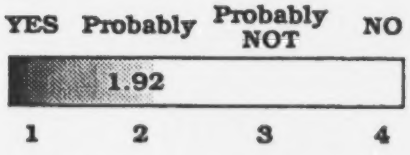
Question 10



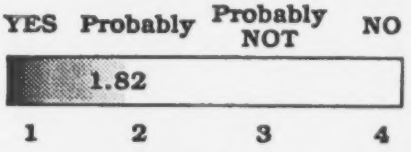
Do you think the children would feel uncomfortable with a male teacher on staff?

Question 11



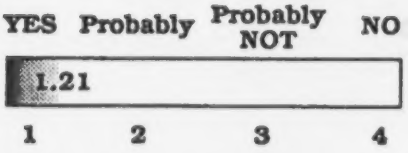
Would you allow a male to teach alone in the classroom?

Question 12



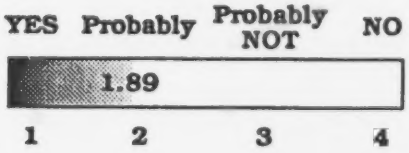
Do you allow female teachers to be alone in the classroom?

Question 16



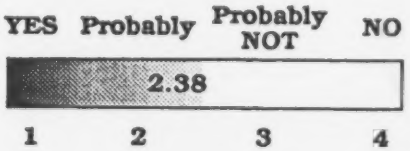
Would you consider father volunteers in your center?

Question 17



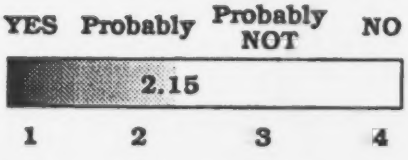
Do you think women have an inherent nurturing instinct?

Question 18



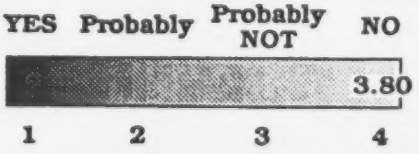
Do you think men have an inherent nurturing instinct?

Question 20



In your opinion, has the McMartin Trial in California had a negative infuluence on the image of the male child care teacher?

Question 21



Has th McMartin Trail played a part in your decision whether or not to have men on your staff?

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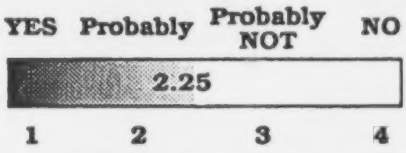
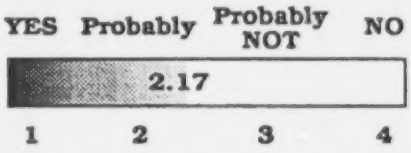
Question 13



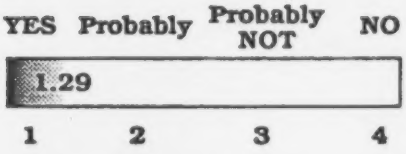
Would you allow male teachers to change diapers?

Question 14



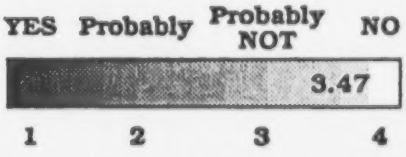
Would you allow male teachers to potty train toddlers?

Question 15



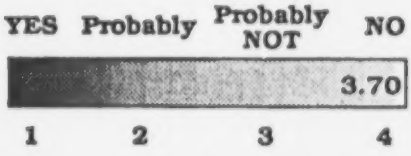
Do you allow female teachers to change diapers and potty train?

Question 19



Do any of the following fears apply to your attitudes about men as early childhood teachers?
Fear of:
Abuse; Neglect; Molestation; Rough Play

Question 22



Do any of the following fears apply to your attitudes about women as early childhood teachers?
Fear of:
Abuse; Neglect; Molestation; Rough Play

Centers	Profit	Non-Profit
218	51	167
	Female	**Male**
Infants	223	1
Toddlers	356	3
Preschool	1155	24
Kindergarten	134	2
Before/After School	194	23
Support Staff	354	45
Total	2416	98

	YES	NO
Have any men ever applied for teaching positions at your center?	111	111
Do any fathers volunteer in your center?	120	102

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Chapter 7

Recruiting men to child care

by Bruce Sheppard & Bryan G. Nelson

For the child care center director or other person in authority who who like to see more men in child care the big question is: "How do we recruit more men?" Our current estimate is that no more than four percent of the early childhood education and child care positions are men. During the height of the Vietnam War when young men where seeking deferrment from the military, estimates for the late 60's and early 70's have been as high as seven percent. The best place to start to increase our numbers is with young men.

School recruitment

Few if any high school guidance counselors steer promising teenage boys into early childhood education as an occupation. We may not be able to change ingrained cultural values but steering potential candidates in the right direction is one early way to get young men to consider working with young children. In Minnesota we are in the beginning stages of developing a packet for every guidance counselor in the state that will inform them of the benefits and provide the resources to help a young man with a career choice in child care. A telephone call can sometimes be the necessary incentive to convince a guidance counselor to mention a center's job opening. This can also be done through the local college or university. Having discussions with the education department or physical education department can provide some prospects for your program.

One-to-one approach

The most effective way to recruit men into early childhood profession besides institutional guidance and support from the workplace through hiring practices (see the chapter on: Hiring a man) is a one-to-one approach. Most of the men we have talked with always mention a supportive woman either getting him in child care or helping to keep him there. Just as many movements were nurtured by one to one contact, a proven method of bringing men into the field has been for individuals, especially other men, to personally support men who are considering the idea.

Whether it is the director, a board member, a parent or spouse, there needs to be someone who makes the initial gesture of asking a man to work in child care. The authors spend a lot of their spare time planning seminars, retreats, and newsletters (and writing this book) with the goal of recruiting men. We also take time to talk to men individually, when they need a supportive person to be with. And there are other men across the country doing the same thing. We'll be discussing these issues later.

Better then fast food

When we talk to men about child care, we encourage them to consider working a job tempoarily. Many in our profession look at this as harmful or bad for the profession. We disagree. Having men work with children for a year of their life provides, in our opinion, more for the man and for the program that has the man work for them. As we see it, there is already a high turnover in the profession. If a man wants to explore working with young children, he may find out that he likes it and will make this temporary "job" into a career. Even if he does not remain, he will learn something that he can use in his personal life in his future relationship with children. The child care program benefits by having a man spending time playing with children; a benefit we believe outweighs the disadvantage. Turnover is difficult for children (and coworkers) but, the absence of nurturing playful men is worse. And certainly, working with chidren is more valuable to our society then working with fast food.

The big picture

Recruiting one-to-one is essential to getting a man to work at a child care center. But there is a bigger picture, just as there is for civil rights or equal rights for woman. The major way we are going to recruit more men into the early childhood field will have to be an overhaul of one aspect of the institution of early childhood education. What we mean is that a basic ingredient of all early childhood programs should be the education of young children in the attitude of men being positive and essential part of their lives.

In the past 20 or 30 years fathers have been absent in children's lives. We are now finding that boys and girls who did not have positive male role models in early childhood can have, as teens and later adults, emotional and social problems related to that absence. Boys seek out alternative male role models such as gang leaders and girls have trouble relating to men when they become adults.

Early childhood professionals need to declare that "Men in the lives of young children", is not just a good idea but a vital one. We need to communicate to the public that more men are welcome and needed. This kind of large scale backing by the entire profession will be the most effective way to begin to recruit more men into the early childhood profession.

Chapter 8

Hiring a man: Employment practices

by Bryan G. Nelson & Bruce Sheppard

What a child care center or school system does as a basic plan in hiring staff should not look different when men are considered for positions. However, there are simple things that can be done each step of the hiring process to ensure that a man receives proper consideration for an opening.

The very first step in the hiring process is the most difficult. You must decide that you *really* want men to work in your program. You need to look at your attitudes about men and about men who would want to work with children. Do you really want a man to work in your program? With your children? What do you think is the greatest barrier to having a man work in your program? And saying that you can't find any doesn't count. Men are out there who would work in child care. For more information about looking at your staff and your attitudes look for Jim Levine's work about men and children in Head Starts (Scholastic Books, 1993). He has been working with men's issues since the 70's and has a keen perception on what needs to happen to get men participating.

Once you've looked at your attitude and you've decided you really do want men in your program you need to look at your recruiting and hiring practices. A word of caution here: You should consult a legal expert in your community. What may be true in Minnesota may not be true in Arkansas.

The hiring process

We're assuming that you already know the basics of good hiring procedures. If you don't, we recommend that you attend a workshop or read some good books. When a hiring process begins, whoever is in charge of the process not only needs to carry out non-discriminatory practices, but needs to proactively and unapologetically champion the active recruitment of men. That person will have to make it clear to the parents, the hiring committee or interviewing staff that a male candidate is an asset to the program. This can be a difficult prospect for many adults, both men and women. Most

programs would say they do not discriminate in hiring, but as a committee forms few people think of a man to be actively recruited or interviewed. We often hear, "Men just don't apply for these low paying jobs" or "There really aren't enough qualified men." As Tom Masterson shows in his research in chapter 6, men do apply, they just do not get hired. A director, board member, parent or staff person must be outspoken about the need for a diverse staff; a diverse staff means actively recruiting men for child care positions.

Job descriptions

Most programs have on file standard job descriptions. Before an opening is advertised, the job description should be scrutinized to determine whether there are built in restrictions that would eliminate a male candidate. For example, some child care centers have a written or implied policy that states that men should not be caregivers for infants and toddlers due to the risk of abuse accusations during diapering or comforting. We've heard many comments about the practicality of this discrimination: "We don't want the parents to get the wrong idea" or "Our parents wouldn't like it." Fair minded people sometimes see no problem in placing such restrictions on men. To better understand how inappropriate this attitude is, substitute a different criteria: a black woman or a Jewish woman.

Such restrictions are illegal. We understand and acknowledge concerns about child abuse. Later we discuss ways to protect yourself and programs from possible abuse incidents and accusations.

If there are no discriminatory language in the job descriptions or policies in hiring, the next step would be in advertising the position.

Advertising for men

Many programs end their newspaper ad with "women and minorities welcome". A program that wants male teachers should include "men encouraged to apply".

Where you advertise is also a key to active recruitment of men. Some programs post at the local college or technical school. This is an easy way to miss a male candidate. Mailing job postings to schools can be ineffective. Many school guidance counselors dissuade males from seeking a career in early childhood education. When we called local schools last year, the responses we received were disheartening, "it's too low paying for men." They did not realize how insulting this is to women who have child care as a career. If it is too low paying for men, then it sould be considered too low paying for women. Or others said, "it's really not appropriate for males, I usually steer them elsewhere." Since then, we've held information meetings for high school students challenging these stereotypes.

Advertising in city-wide, neighborhood and ethnic newspapers will help ensure that men find out about openings. Think about in what section you place the advertisement. If you always place the ad under child care you will miss many unem-

ployed men. Put in under general help and label it: youth work. You can post job openings at places men gather: gyms; recreational halls; libraries. Consider male parents in your program who may be out of work or temporarily laid off. And there are retired fathers or young men looking for work. When it is difficult to find work, a child care program will be better than flipping burgers for the same rate of pay.

Screening for interviews

If your intention is to recruit more men to your program, as the applications come in from men, give them a second look. We aren't suggestion that you hire incompetent men. But, rather, consider how you weigh the factors you use for hiring. Perhaps a man working at a youth camp isn't as qualified as a woman with a bachelors degree in early childhood education. But, if all your staff have early education degrees and you have no men on your teaching staff, you are limiting the diversity and ultimately the richness of your program.

Early in the process, as the hiring committee is being formed at least one man should be put on the committee to help set the stage of acceptance of hiring a man for the job. If a male staff member cannot be found then a father, grandfather, community member, etc. should be contacted to serve. When both of the authors were hired for their first child care jobs, neither had a lot of experience nor training working with young children. We were fortunate to have a hiring committee that valued diversity.

Interviewing the man

The basic rule in all interviews is: What you ask one candidate, you must ask all candidates. It's important to avoid asking personal questions, e.g. marital status. You can ask all candidates what do they think will be the most difficult part of the job. But, asking gender related questions is inappropriate and possibly illegal.

When feasible, it is good to have all candidates spend time with the children to see how they interact with them. There is an unconscious assumption out there that most men really are not good with children, but most women are. Having a male candidate display his skills can put aside such fears from parents and hiring committee members.

Reference check

As with any candidate: Request and check references. We've known programs that did not check a candidates previous employer. It has turned out they had been fired because of child abuse. If the references you are given are not helpful, ask for more references. But be certain to document what the references state. And again, whatever you ask for one candidate, you must ask for all. In most states, there is a requirement to do a criminal background check. This will only tell you if a person has been convicted of a crime. Do not let a clean background check lull you into thinking that any person, male or female, is necessarily "safe". Use all the appropriate methods to find a competent and trustworthy employee.

Offering a man a job

One creative solution to getting more men on staff is to make a conditional job offer to a man who requires more education. Many men who have good rapport with children, may not have adequate training. If the man meets the minimum qualifications, you can offer the position on contingency that he get further approved training. In some cases, when you are trying to increase the number of male staff, a conditional hire can provide the needed incentive for a man to make child care a career.

New man on the block

If a man is hired and he is the first man a staff has ever worked with, it is the responsibility of the director to actively advocate for the idea of keeping this new man around. As a new man goes through probation, an employee review may be an appropriate time to see if there are any problems. In a later chapter, we'll talk about appropriate and inappropriate language, environment and work culture.

It isn't necessary to overhaul hiring policies, procedures nor practices in order to hire a male staff member. It is however, necessary to look at one's attitudes. Then, with a new perspective, each step of the hiring process should be carefully examined to ensure there no roadblocks to the process of hiring a man.

Hiring a man to work in a predominently female occupation can lead to some new and interesting challenges for you, your staff and your center.

Part 2

Overview: Men dealing with challenges and making solutions

by Bryan G. Nelson

Being in child care is a challenge. And being a man in child care is such a challenge that there is only about 1 or 2 men for every 100 women. Something is going on that keeps men away.

In this section of the handbook, several authors write about some of the challenges facing men in child care. They also provide some practical solutions.

The following chapters talk about accusations of abuse, but, don't discuss the fear of being accused of child sexual abuse. Our salary information provides information about wages and working conditions but not the poor pay a man receives while trying to support a family. In another chapter we touch on the struggle of racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism that confronts us everyday. There aren't any miracle answers to those problems, either. (At least not in this edition). On a limited basis, we try to give you information that you can use in your work with children. The first issue is very controversial: Child abuse.

I've talked with several men in the past ten years who had been accused of child abuse. None of the men were ever convicted. They might have well been; their lives were changed forever. One man I know, I'll call him Fred, was a good teacher. He had been working for eight years as a teacher. He had his elementary education and preschool licensure. The children really loved being in his classroom. One day, a parent called the director of the program and said that her child had been abused. Immediately Fred was suspected. He was suspended without pay and was told it would be "until the investigation was completed". A police officer interrogated Fred. Even though no charges were filed everyone treated him as if he was guilty. Staff and parents shunned him. Most would say that they didn't believe the accusations of the parent. But, still, when they would see Fred at the grocery store they would go the other way.

The parent had a history of problems: writing bad checks to the cen-

ter; an arrest record; and, child protection had removed her child two times. Fred was very understanding: "If I had suspected that my child was being abused, I would have been furious. But, they aren't even waiting for any evidence." On the positive side, Fred told me later that, "some of my friends did stick with me. If they hadn't, I doubt whether I would have survived."

As the case remained opened over a eight month period, Fred had to work at another job doing carpentry to pay his bills. He wasn't able to get another teacher job until this accusation had been resolved. The mother had changed her story several times. The police would not give Fred any information because, as they said, the case remained "open".

Finally after a year, the mother confessed that it had been her boyfriend and not Fred. But by then it was too late; Fred's reputation was severely damaged. Even though his name was cleared, he would always have the suspicion of abuse over his head.

A variety to choose

The challenges men face entering and remaining in child care are pretty basic: Accusations of abuse; stressful working conditions; low pay; isolation; sexism; racism and classism . As we worked on this handbook we have recognized that the solutions are perhaps just as basic: Supportive environment; solid self-esteem; creative career planning. Though both challenges and solutions are basic, neither is easy.

Chapter 1

Innocent or guilty: Dealing with accusations of child abuse

by Coleman Baker & Durwood Collier, Jr.

Nationally, child abuse in general and child sexual abuse specifically are found in both licensed centers and in Registered Family Day Care Homes; all states can produce numbers. In Vermont, we have more children cared for in RCDH's than in centers. We also have more cases of substantiated abuse in RDCH's. We're ushering more of those homes out of business because of more abuse foundings than ever before. There is more opportunity for abuse in family day care because there is more access to children in care by the provider's family members, and less opportunity for other adults to observe inappropriate behavior. Most foundings, but not all, are against husbands, uncles, grandfathers and sons of the provider. We have also seen the home provider herself, or her daughter being founded for child abuse. In Vermont one can not dwell, visit or be employed at a child care facility if s/he has been determined by Social Services to be a child abuse offender. This article discusses those persons who through their intentional acts become child abusers.

Child care setting

In child care center settings the risk of family members being accused of abusing children gives way to the chance that employees of the center may be accused. Worse: about one quarter of those allegations which come to the attention of officials in Vermont lead to foundings.

I have categorized abusers in four types which I will describe:

Type I Persons who have allowed equipment to deteriorate to a hazardous level. Children are sometimes injured due to the provider's inattention, unwillingness, or neglect. They might be bus drivers, janitors, cooks, caregivers, or even administrators, who have responsibility for maintenance or use of equipment.

Type II Emotional abusers, persons who damage children by inappropriate use of normal human emotion which lowers a child's sense of safety, well-being or self-worth.

Type III Physical abusers, persons who do not understand or are not familiar with good supervision techniques - or persons who have difficulty controlling their tempers; their responses may result in severe corporal punishment. Potential abusers in this category are staff persons who are overly harsh, use inappropriate disciplinary techniques, or who have unrealistic expectations. And obviously, there is potential for children to be subject to physical abuse at home.

Type IV Sexual abusers, these can be family members or non-family members whose sexual preference or agenda for employment is unknown.

Why do people sexually abuse?

Many sexual abusers offend because, for whatever reason - such as their own abuse - they feel powerless or hopeless when it comes to finding an appropriate outlet for their sexual needs. This leads them to settle for an inappropriate outlet in a person who is helpless or less powerful than the abuser.

Sexual offenders may commit sexual offenses because they are attempting to satisfy some basic emotional, personal, or social need which is not being met in their lives. They are using sex in a destructive manner to meet these needs. They are not looking for simple innocent affection. Offenders often spend much time finding ways to gain access to children. If they have access to children, they will victimize. Sexual offenders abuse children in a planned and orchestrated setting. They have power, knowledge, and resources. They are often great with kids. They are often the kind of person you might want your kids to be with. They can hold a job and be a good worker. According to the Finklehor study, 2/3 of offenders found to have abused a child in a day care center setting had been employed for over two years prior to the disclosure.

The Vermont Experience

In the training we are offering to Vermont day care center directors, we are emphasizing that the center director is ultimately responsible for all aspects of child protection. The following is a list of things directors should consider in the prevention of child abuse in their center.

1. Center directors should provide appropriate education programs for staff, parents and children.

2. The design and maintenance of the physical layout of the facility is a factor in protecting children and the director has this responsibility. There should be no remote locations and bathrooms should be conveniently located. Staff should not have to escort three to five year olds to the bathroom for toileting.

3. The director supervises the staff, volunteers, visiting parents and children, and most often is the person who hires or arranges for non-caregiving staff.

4. Center directors implement policies and procedures and keep records. Center policies should include a list of unacceptable personnel behaviors. Directors should dismiss staff who violate these policies.

5. There should be a record of any injuries a child has upon arrival at the center. The center should have a clear procedure for handling injuries. Directors should maintain a record of any injuries or unusual occurrences that happen at the center which leaves a mark on a child in care.

6. The Director should conduct routine, unannounced observations of staff on a daily basis for protection of children and staff. Keep a record of these observations.

7. Directors should listen carefully to complaints from staff, parents, or children and investigate them thoroughly.

8. Staff should always be present to supervise supplemental staff, such as Santa Claus, Dance, Art, and Gymnastics instructors.

9. Directors should schedule breaks for staff in the daily schedule.

10. Diapering and toileting are often places where victimization occurs. Children can be tricked into undressing and having their genitals touched while toileting. Develop written procedures including who does the diapering. Remember, young children are easily intimidated.

11. Provisions should be made for staff to be within sight of each other.

12. When a staff person must be alone with a child, document the occurrence in writing. Do not allow a staff person to take a child to his or her home unaccompanied. All field trips, including walking field trips, should be known to parents.

13. Immediately report any suspected abuse fully and honestly.

14. Develop a plan, before the fact, to deal with an abuse allegation. Once an allegation is made there will be no time to figure out how to respond. Allegations can make people too emotional to think straight.

Center Policies That Can Reduce Risks of Child Abuse/Neglect

1. The director must acknowledge that he or she may have to deal with an allegation that a child has been abused while in care at the center and therefore develop policies/procedures designed to prevent abuse.

2. Policies should be written and reviewed with staff and board at least annually. There should be policies of behavior management - clearly defining and forbidding corporal punishment. Staff must know about the state's reporting requirements. The director must assure him/herself that the staff of the center know the laws. Vermont Day Care Licensing Regulations require that each staff

person, volunteer, and parent, must have on file a signed statement stating that the individual was informed of the center's policies and that he or she is aware that the abuse and/or neglect of children is against the law and prohibited by the program. It should be your state's policy, and if not make it yours, that a parent has free access without delay to the areas where his or her child is cared for.

3. Have two staff on premises at all times when children are present. Staff should avoid the tendency to socialize while on duty. They should move about interacting with the children and observe all parts of the facility. Evaluate the center for its ease of supervision. A caregiver's presence, whether looking on or physically helping should radiate a zone of safety and control in which children feel secure enough to play freely. If you are knowingly allowing the child/adult ratio to be exceeded, you may be contributing to child abuse. Know what the signs and symptoms of an abused child are. Impart that knowledge to your staff.

4. Directors should know what the signs or symptoms of an abused child are and impart that knowledge to their staff. Weave aspects of abuse prevention into the program. In potential sexual abuse situations, children need to trust their own judgment - they may need to recognize what is inappropriate and know who in their lives it is safe to tell of abuse. Therefore, develop policies which encourage problem solving among preschoolers. Do not rely on adult-dictated solutions. Build self-esteem. Allow children the choice of not participating in an activity. See that a personal safety program involves "What if?", and "Who to Tell" games to help children protect themselves. Remind parents that they need to convey to their children that it is safe and right to let parents know if something isn't right at the child care facility.

5. The director's skill in hiring people may be the most important aspect of the job. Have written job descriptions for each position. Document references, especially by personal contact with the last employer. If employers are reluctant to discuss an employee's history, appeal to their ethical values and cooperation. If they are still unwilling to discuss work history, discuss with the applicant whether or not they had a problem with this last employment. Conduct careful interviews. Ask pertinent questions, such as "If you saw another teacher strike a child, what would you do?".

   Give the applicant opportunity to interact with the children, and observe. Encourage the staff to make and report their own observations of the applicant in action with the children. Use a three to six month probationary period. A probationary period allows for orderly termination if employment is not working out for

either party. Once someone is hired, a file should be established on that person. Keep references, your notes of contact with references, work histories, job descriptions, records of subsequent training - and signed statements acknowledging an understanding of child abuse/neglect laws and center policies. Protect yourself.

6. Develop policies in advance on how to handle accusations of abuse. The best defense against an occurrence of abuse in your facility is the presence of appropriately written policies and procedures, and evidence that these policies and procedures are carried out, generally, and were followed, in fact, in any case at issue.

In other words: Develop procedures and policies for response to an allegation, in advance, including:

Communication with parents, staff, board, or owner(s). Parents, staff and board all need to know what will happen if an allegation is made. If the procedure is to suspend the alleged abuser with pay, everyone should know prior to an allegation, that such a suspension is procedural, and not judgemental at the time.

When responding to news media, designate a single spokesperson. Be careful of what is said. Be aware that statements can be misinterpreted.

Develop a generalized plan in advance regarding what to say and what not to say to the media. Develop a statement that includes:

I. Your support for the investigation.

II. Your support for the alleged victims.

III. Your willingness to correct any problems if the investigation verifies the existence of problems.

IV. Emphasize the harm false or premature conclusions can cause to the reputation of staff persons and the facility itself.

Acknowledge that you are going to suddenly find yourself under an immense amount of personal and professional stress. Be aware that the normal reaction to allegations of abuse is denial. It is important to understand these feelings of denial so that you do not unintentionally impede the investigation. Know who your resource and support people are so you can go to them to vent your anger, hurt, and frustration.

Select an attorney. Pick an attorney with expertise in the abuse area, if one can be found. Don't pay for his/her training and mistakes.

Resist the temptation to conduct an internal investigation. Abusers will deny and the children should not be over-interviewed. Leave that to skilled persons.

When an allegation is made remember that any employee who is accused of child abuse should without delay obtain a lawyer.

Begin keeping a log of all relevant contacts for future use. Remove the alleged abuser from contact with children.

Cooperate fully with the authorities. Ask questions of investigators to find out what to expect. Try not to become too emotional or defensive. Be honest in your responses.

If removing an alleged abuser from contact with the children would compromise the official investigation, authorities should issue instructions to that effect in writing. In this case, the alleged abuser would have to be observed unobtrusively at all times.

Lastly, solicit your local regulatory agency to work with yourself and other providers in advance to emphasize prevention. Develop an open relationship with them which focuses on prevention. Encourage and support your licensing office's efforts to provide assistance to you and other directors - assistance in the way of simple, straightforward outlines, outlines of what I have just shared with you. Be prepared so you can provide leadership to your staff and families if you receive the call.

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Durwood Collier is a graduate of St. Michael's College in Winoski, Vermont and has worked in Vermont child care licensing since 1970. He filled the roles of licensor and state-wide complaint investigator, and currently works as licensing supervisor.

Chapter 2

Working conditions and money

from the National Child Care Study

Little boys are supposed to grow up to be big men who have wives and families and earn big bucks to support them. Right? If this is the message men carry with them as they attempt to make a decent living, it is no wonder very few men make child care a career. Those that wander into the field usually wander right back out again once they learn that one cannot make a living from the paltry wages the child care field offers.

The National Child Care Staffing Study, 1988, conducted by the Child Care Employee Project headquartered in Oakland, California provides information about inadequate working conditions and low wages for child care workers:

America depends on child care teachers. Every business - from the corner grocery to IBM - relies on their services. Mothers, fathers, and, most importantly, children count on their skill and availability. Child care teachers, many of whom are working parents themselves, make it possible for millions of women and men to balance the dual roles of worker and parent. But an alarming number of these teachers are leaving their jobs, disrupting the lives of children and families. This prompts us to ask who are the child care teachers and why won't they stay.

Everyone knows that nearly all child care teachers are women. Fewer people know that most are in their childbearing years and almost half have children of their own. Over two-fifths have children under age six. Two-thirds of those with young children bring them to their centers while they work. Many child care teachers, in particular those holding lower-paid assistant teacher and aide positions, are members of minorities.

Child care teachers, like all other teachers of children, are typically paid for thirty-five hours or more each week. Unlike most teachers, they work year-round. Their paid hours are spent in the classroom teaching and caring for children. Teachers also work between three and four additional unpaid hours per week preparing curriculum, fund raising, or meeting with parents and staff. For most child care teachers, even lunches and breaks are spent caring for children. A third receive no paid holidays or vacation. Only six out of ten receive

paid sick leave.

The average child care teacher has completed more years of formal education than the average worker in the United States. Approximately two-third of teachers have received specialized training to work with children. Of these, half have received this training at the college level.

Most child care teachers earn poverty level wages despite their education and training. Over half earn $5 an hour or less. Meager as they are, these earnings are essential to their family income. For one-quarter of the teachers, their wages constitute over two-thirds of their household earnings. To supplement their income, one fifth of full-time teachers work a second job. Most child care teachers receive minimal employment benefits even when they work full-time. Two-thirds of all teaching staff receive no health coverage and four out of five have no retirement plan. Only a third get annual cost-of-living raises. Teachers earning the lowest wages receive the fewest benefits.

Child care teachers value and enjoy their work. Their greatest sources of satisfaction are participating in the growth and development of the children and working closely with their colleagues. They find most of their responsibilities challenging and rewarding. Six out of ten have worked in child care for over three years. Two-thirds of child care teachers consider child care their career, not just a temporary job.

Six months after they were first interviewed, over a third of the teachers had already left their centers. Of those who left, only one-third took other jobs in the early childhood field. Over half of the teachers gave low pay as their reason for leaving. Other reasons were lack of benefits and limited opportunity for advancement. Teachers with the lowest wages left their jobs most frequently.

Poverty level wages and inadequate benefits are discouraging qualified teachers from entering or remaining in the child care field. America depends on child care teachers. Can child care teachers depend on America to reward their work with worthwhile wages?

From the information presented in this study it is little wonder that men (and women) find it difficult to support themselves and their families with wages earned in child care. It is noteworthy that as pay in child care has deteriorated, the percentage of men in the field has also gone down.

What can men do about it? They can find other employment and make a decent wage, but of course we want to see men stay in the field, not leave it. They can try to change the poor wage situation on their own. We feel that is a poor use of the time and energy of individual men. It would be a better use of time to support efforts to improve wages as a part of unions and other professional organizations where women are organizing for better wages and working conditions. Though these organizations have primarily female membership, men and women are clearly allies in this endeavor.

A third alternative is to develop a career plan that points a man towards a higher paying job in the ear-

ly childhood field, such as center director, special educator, or college professor. It is sad to see men stop directly serving children in order to make more money. But at least those who choose other early childhood positions put something into the profession in another way.

Sooner or later each man will have to confront the issue of wages and working conditions in their careers. We hope that men will choose to remain, in some form or another. If they choose not to, our profession will still have benefited from an additional man working with children. And the man will leave with an emotionally, (definitely not financially), richer experience.

Chapter 3

Isolation: Where are all the other men?

by Bruce Sheppard

Because men in the early childhood field have to face the issue of isolation on a daily basis, it ranks as one of the major issues having a negative impact on men. Most men serving in early childhood programs commonly work at sites with no other men or perhaps one man (usually the director). This isolation is comparable to the situation of women who work in male-dominated fields such as engineering, law, or finance.

A man serving as the only male in a program has it difficult. This does not mean that it is impossible to share feelings and get support from women on the job, but it is less likely. Most men we talked to do not rely on support from women co-workers for their professional support. Most seek out or develop a variety of sources for their support network, most, but, not all, from outside their workplace.

A small number of men we talked to mentioned co-workers or supervisors as sources of support, but most of those men also mentioned other sources that they relied upon. Friends, family, and quite a few parents in their center can be supportive.

Some other sources of support mentioned include: 12-Step programs; own parents; Memberships in National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); other early childhood groups; and, involvement in groups outside of the profession.

Another common way men told us that they seek out support for themselves is their involvement in men in early childhood activities and organizations.

In doing our work for this book we sought out men at retreats and conferences. As a result, we came in contact with men who were doing at least something already to deal with their sense of isolation - attend an activity where they would meet other men in the early childhood field. This would tend to have us believe, as their responses to our questions about isolation indicated, that these active men are more the exception

than the rule in how well men deal with isolation problems.

In other words, there are many more men in the field who are having an even tougher time out there. In the past we have made connections with men who have excitedly begun a career in early childhood. Then we find out a year or two later that they have left the field, with isolation being a major reason for their departure.

The men who remain have either developed their own support or have obtained support from female colleagues and directors. These men in the early childhood field have been able to identify isolation as a problem for them and have taken steps to deal with it. Unfortunately a larger number of the men in the field need assistance in dealing with this issue. Since being isolated means not having men in their programs to gain support from, women colleagues and directors need to offer their support. If women in the field truly want to see more men in early childhood positions and to see the men stay in those positions, these women have to both encourage the men on the job and also help the men find ways to get the support they need outside the program.

But ultimately men need to make some sort of peace with their position of isolation and actively seek out sources of support for themselves. There are no signs on the horizon that indicate that there are going to be hordes of men jumping into the early childhood education profession.

If men want to stay with this career then they must accept the support women have to offer. We must be persistent and creative in how we find our support. We need men to stay in the field and to prosper.

Chapter 4

Solutions: A rural perspective

by Steve Weber

When I first told my father I had accepted a position in the "country", his mouth hung open, his eyes rounded, and he whispered, almost inaudibly, "Why?"

Men who teach and work with children in rural settings are unique. Nationally, as men in child care in general, we represent (at most) 4% of the work force. We face isolation, sexist stereotypes, and a society and culture that is slow to change and accept men working in a predominantly female field.

I work in the community of Onamia, for the Onamia Public School System as an Early Childhood Special Needs Instructor. The city of Onamia consists of 340 residents, is located in central Minnesota, and is 110 miles north of Minneapolis. Economically, the area consists of old family farms that are struggling to survive, a stable resort industry around Lake Mille Lacs, and the introduction of new jobs through legalized gambling on the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians Reservation.

My responsibilities include providing classroom (center based) and home based instruction for children birth through age six that exhibit developmental, physical, mental, and/or other deficits that would hinder normal development. The school district draws children from a 281 square mile radius. Additionally, the Onamia School System is a member of an Education Cooperative with eight other small districts. The cooperative provides administrative and consultative services that would be financially prohibitive for a small district to provide locally. Until 1989, I was the only male early childhood instructor in the cooperative. At this writing, two other men have been hired as speech clinicians in a neighboring school district. They work primarily with young children.

To better understand individuals who work in rural areas , I feel we can generally be classified into one of three categories. The first are those who grew up in rural communities, know the culture and communication systems, and are comfortable in both the professional and

social milieu. The second are those that take a position in a rural area, know nothing about "ruralness", and are simply biding time until a job becomes available in an urban area. The third group are those who may not have a rural background, but find the challenges of living in a small community to be both stimulating and rewarding. I belong to the third category.

It appears to me that all men who work in child care face challenges and unique problems being male in a primarily female occupation. But living in a rural area amplifies these problems. Below are several real life examples of what I have dealt with.

1. It was mid morning and one of my young charges was obviously in need of diaper change. I scooped the little 'stinker' up and went into the bathroom. As I was going through the changing ritual, I had the sensation of being watched. I turned to look over my shoulder to find three female co-workers looking on. I queried why they were watching, and they stated that they didn't think I could do it. I replied, "But I have two of my own children!". They replied, "SO?".

2. The day was not going particularly well. The kids seemed like they had 'springs on their butts' every time we tried to get them to the table. So, being flexible, I pulled out the play doctor kit, and turned the kids loose. Before long I was laying on my back getting a thorough and somewhat painful exam. The kids squealed with delight as they poked me with the syringe, and tested my reflexes with the hammer. Without noticing her arrival, my principal chose this time to walk in for an 'informal' observation. I looked up, she looked down. "I'll see you in my office!", she snapped as she strode out of the room. When the morning was over I went to the 'principal's office'. Without hesitation she asked, "Just what in the hell were you doing down there?!?". Before I could respond, she yelled "You're a man for Christ's sake! Stay off the floor with those children."

3. A new adaptive toilet seat had arrived for one of our students. It was obvious that it required assembly. A lot of assembly. I was asked to please put it together, and not to worry about the other children. "We'll take care of them...". As I looked at all the various bits and pieces, I asked why they wanted me to do it? My co-workers responded by simply stating, "you're a man".

4. As a member of our education cooperative, we had monthly early childhood meetings. During those meetings we would often break into small groups to brainstorm solutions to problems we may have with particular children. For the first three years I was never once asked for an opinion.

Throughout my years in Onamia, I have dealt with a number of other issues:

- is he perverted?
- is he competent?
- is he mentally and emotionally stable?
- is he knowledgeable about child development?
- is he married?
- is he gay?
- he must not be very motivated.
- he can't get a real job.
- can he be trusted?
- IS HE A REAL MAN?

To expand on these issues, thoughts, perceptions and attitudes, I asked the director of the Onamia Early Childhood Family Education Program, Ms. Sue Bracken, and her staff, to comment on what they felt were the barriers or obstacles for men to overcome as child care workers.

- a man doing a non-traditional job may be 'suspicious'
- women may be less likely to confide/participate in a parent group with a male teacher
- women may be less likely to trust that a man knows enough about child development
- a man may be viewed more as an expert (based solely on being male), than being nurturing.
- men can't empathize.

When comparing the lists, one can find two basic common denominators.

1. Can men do the job, are they competent?
2. Can they be trusted with young children?

One can also say that what men face in the child care work place is not unlike the sexist barriers women have battled over the past several decades in male dominated professions.

Why bother and what to do?

So why do we do it? Why do I do it? Simply, kids are as gas! The world of children is a universe that is constantly changing, is never static, and brings joy to my life. Why would I want to do anything else?

What can be done to change outdated attitudes? I have listed several ideas that I have tried over the years to promote both my position in early childhood, and the notion that men belong in this field.

- Demonstrate positive involvement with children through your actions.
- Let people around you know that you support programs for children and youth.
- As a teacher, invite parents into your classroom or day care setting and ask that they observe.
- Attend community meetings, make your presence known.
- Invite your local paper in to do a story on something you and the kids are particularly proud of.
- Make parents aware that you are sensitive to their child's needs, and that you are willing to discuss the day's events.

We know that men bring something very different to the work place. Not something better than women, just a different perspective. Men add a 'maleness' to the child's environment. We also provide a positive role model, and we may attract fathers to the classroom. We allow children to see many different sides of men, most importantly, we teach children through our actions, that we ARE nurturing.

And finally, the most important thing men in child care can do is to support one another, share ideas and concerns, and set aside time to get together as a group and talk. Yes, men gather to talk, and not just about car batteries!

Men in the early childhood field are few and far between. I have battled outdated and sexist stereotypes, and continue to do so (though thankfully, not as often). Through consciousness-raising, we demonstrate that our involvement with children is both healthy and necessary, and adds to a child's overall perspective of the world around them.

Steve Weber is father of two great kids, McKellen (10) and Branigan (7). His teaching experience has taken him from the frozen tundra of Alaska as an itinerant infant educator, through various 'urban ' schools, to his current position in Onamia. His Bachelor's degree is in Special Education, and Master of Science degree is in Early Childhood. He is currently enrolled in a Specialist degree program at St Cloud State University.

Part 3

Overview: Men remaining in the field

by Bruce Sheppard

If you have read through most of the preceding sections of this book you would have found that there are many, many stresses that go with working in the early childhood field as a male. In spite of these stresses there are men who continue to dedicate themselves to the care and education of young children. Part of the book looked at the majors stresses and offered some remedies and solutions to specific problems. It is the purpose of this section to discuss ways men remain in the early childhood field. Over the past few years, we distributed questionnaires at gatherings of men from early childhood programs, at conferences, through the mail. The following are some insights that those questionnaires provided.

High Ideals

Most of respondents indicated that high ideals kept them going more than anything else. John Gunnarson of Woodacre, California says that child care is one of the most important jobs in today's world. Steve Weber of Hillman, Minnesota (see his article Solutions: A rural perspective) likes making a difference in the lives of kids and offering them "hope" and a safe person to be with. Lowell Johnson from Cambridge, Minnesota enjoys the rewards of working with young children and parents. Rick Gravrock of Minneapolis, Minnesota says that "I get back a lot for everything I give." Brint Sagle of Lakebay, Washington indicates that it is the impetus - that once you get going it is hard to stop; that keeps him going and that he constantly gets to learn about himself and children.

The second most common factor that keeps men in the field is being in a supportive and exciting center, home, or school. Bryan and Bruce, the authors, both began their careers at centers that had other male child care workers. These centers also had written policies that highly valued having men in the centers. At one point in Bruce's career, he worked in a child care program in Minneapolis where nine out of the 23 permanent staff members were men. Elliot Lebediker of Albany, New York tells us that his center also has high ideals

and that keeps him going. His center clearly tells the public that it is co-operative based, non-sexist, anti-racist, and non-violent. He also gets tremendous support from a good and talented director.

These are men that are happy with their career choices and derive great satisfaction from what they do, but they don't rely solely on the job involvement as a source of support. As a man in child care, it is imperative to seek out a variety of sources for support to stay in the field. As a director, it is just as important to encourage the man in the program to search outside the program. We'll discuss more about program support later in this chapter.

Advancement

The traditional way men have remained in the field has been to seek out career advancement. The best example of this is the man who works his way to director of a child care center. This has been especially true of men who have been attempting to support a family in whole or part form their earnings. We have no figures on this but we have talked with many directors who are men who have told us that their primary motivation in moving to director was to make more money and would love to return to the classroom – if the money were there.

Advancement is still a popular way to make a change and/or make more money, but it is no longer the only option. With some extra education or none at all, depending upon the position sought, there are part-time positions available to supplement a child care career and salary.

Community education is a good way to find extra work. Workshops for other professionals in early childhood can be taught. More popular is teaching or assisting classes for parent education, especially groups and course for fathers. Local early childhood associations also sponsor workshops and courses that offer a change of pace and a little extra pay.

Another way of remaining in the field is by specializing. This is a method that the authors have employed. Bryan took nurses training, became a Registered Nurse, and is presently Health Services Director for Parents in Community Action, Inc. Head Start serving Hennepin County. Bruce took classes in early childhood special education and is presently an early childhood special education classroom teacher for Minneapolis Public Schools. Bruce took this training after having previously earned a bachelors degree in another field, but there are other men who have earned a bachelor's degree with the intent of specializing and remaining in the field. The best advice is to decide what you would like to specialize in and go for it – it's worth it.

In summary, the men who remain in this field the longest usually have one or more of these factors present in their career: high ideals; effective support; and, advancement or specialization. Programs can provide some support to their male staff but we as men must seek out and develop the other aspects to "keep our fires burning".

Chapter 1

Keeping men in your program

by Bruce Sheppard

This section is for the directors of programs who are asking themselves the question, "What can I do to keep men working at my program?" Let's start answering this question by profiling a real child care center in Minneapolis which had actively kept men working at its child care program.

Model Center

The center that Bruce Sheppard was working at in the early and mid-eighties had as many as nine men out of 23 staff members. Currently that figure still hovers around five to six men. How did that center achieve such a high rate of male participation while other nearby centers would have only one man or no men at all. One thing they did when they sought to fill a position, was rating a man as high as a person of color or having lots of experience and education. This ranking of men was written in their policies and explained to potential families and potential staff members. It was a clear policy and whoever did not like the idea of men being around need not stay.

Another thing the center did was that it did not have separate rules for men and women. They had a proactive nurturing policy that did not allow men or women to be alone with children at any time. There are a surprising number of centers that only exclude men from being alone with children and do not even let men work with infants and toddlers. What a great way to tell a man that he is not wanted nor trusted.

A third factor that kept the number of men at the center high was the active recruitment of men; there was always a steady supply of male applicants. As men worked in this supportive environment they saw other men there and got to share male comraderie. They supported each other in a potentially stressful situation. They didn't feel as isolated as the "loner", as the only man in another center might feel.

Bruce's center did not pay better than many other places of similar quality. Life as an employee there wasn't perfect by any means. But the proactive stance they took on many

issues did work, and it worked to keep men there.

What can a center or program director do to keep men as employees? In a review of the high points of Bruce's center in Minneapolis we note:

1) A high value is given to a male candidate in hiring;

2) Support of men is clear to prospective families;

3) Subscribe to an equal nurturing policy;

4) Female employees are encouraged to support men in their program.

As a result they have maintained a minimum level of 20% male employees over the years.

At this center, and at many of the programs our respondents came from, the critical factor for keeping men in the program is the leadership of the director or any other person in charge. We have already shown that a public pro-active stance in support of men in early childhood professions is important. Also critical is how women support men in their program – not only directors, but, co-workers as well, which was illustrated in the earlier section on male/female dynamics.

In other words, directors and coworkers can keep men in their programs by being as supportive as they can with the unique challenges that face men in the early childhood field. And one more way they can support their male employees is to encourage them to be a part of the organized men in early childhood organizations and programs.

In summary, there is no magical technique that will keep your men in your program. Instead it is the comprehensive attitude of the director, staff, parents and community that says, "Men are valued and needed here!".

Chapter 2

Organizing men in your area

by Bruce Sheppard & Bryan G. Nelson

One of the ways that men in child care get their support, that was mentioned earlier, has been participation in organized men in child care groups and activities. There are organized groups in most parts of the country. The activities and forms of organization vary from state to state and area to area. Variables include population density, leadership, history, and funding. The following are examples of how men in different parts of the country have confronted organizing men in child care and the solutions they came up with.

Minnesota

Minnesota has a 12 year history of organized men in child care activities. It began in the late seventies with workshops about men and the annual fall Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (Mn AEYC) conference. The workshop in 1984 was so well attended they ran out of chairs. From the euphoria of that workshop a committee was formed to organize a winter retreat. The first one was in 1985 and had 16 participants, and there has been a yearly winter retreat ever since. Monthly events were tried but failed but a summer event became a limited success.

Minnesota is, for the most part, a sparsely populated state with half of its 4 million population living in and around the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. Through trial and error, it has worked out that three events a year – a winter retreat, an early summer event like a camp out and a luncheon at the MnAEYC fall conference seems to be sufficient to support men in the state.

Ohio

Tom Masterson of Cleveland, Ohio had a different set of problems to face. When he began his career in child care there was no organized activities for men in child care in Northeast Ohio. That part of Ohio is a densely populated part of the country. Tom has conducted a survey among the men in Ohio, from a Midwest AEYC grant, and has organized an ongoing group of men in NE Ohio. That meets monthly for mutual support.

New Jersey

In Newark, New Jersey, Bosse Jackson has specialized even further in that not only has he conducted his organizing efforts in Newark area but has targeted black male caregivers as his group's composition. He also promotes the child care career for men in the Newark black community.

Besides the struggle of working with children, black men face the added struggle of racism. To combat the stereotypes, Bosse has developed a videotape, held workshops and organized community events for black men in the Newark area.

Massachusetts

There has been a very active group of men in Massachusetts for years. At one point, Steve Shuman had been working as a consultant for the Human Services Department and organized a weekend training where over 150 men attended. He brought in outside speakers, held workshops and had the state pay the bill. There have been newsletters with articles about why men are important in child care.

How do you go about getting a group of men in child care together?

In each case organizers have turned their efforts to meet the particular circumstances of each area. To organize on a statewide basis in Ohio and New Jersey, like Minnesota, would not necessarily work.

There are several things that you can do to organize:

1. Write a grant - NAEYC and local chapters and regions are happy to provide a few hundred dollars to support organizing efforts. Surveys of men in an area, state, or region are good ways to find out who's out there, and to get grant money.
2. Get mailing lists from local AEYC's or other sources (e.g. state licensing list of child care centers). Ask centers about men on their staff.
3. Conduct workshops on men at local conferences. This gets men in as well as directors of programs with and without men.
4. Talk to every man you see at a child care conference. It's surprising how many men are ready to belong to a group, if asked.
5. Put together a retreat, camping trip, one day conference, etc. to get the men together.
6. Write a newsletter informing men on past, present and future activities.
7. Talk to others who have organized men's groups for ideas and support. There is an active men's Caucus that meets every year at the NAEYC conference.

Finally, ask yourself a couple of questions: What is your greatest vision for organizing men? What's your first step? What might get in your way to succeed? How are you going to make certain nothing will stop you? It takes just one person to get an activity started. Just one person, and chances are, you are that person! As you get going, feel free to contact the authors for support and information. Good luck!

Chapter 3

Common questions about men in child care

by Bruce Sheppard & Bryan G. Nelson

Here is a list of common questions with brief answers. More thorough answers can be found within the handbook. These questions and answers have been organized into three groups: Men entering the field; Men who want to remain in the field; and, Directors of programs who want to hire men or keep the men they have.

Men Entering The Field

How do I start?
Contact a man who is currently working with young children and use him as a resource for beginning. Start out by serving as a substitute or volunteer in an early childhood program - they are usually very eager to find good subs and volunteers. Talk to the early childhood department at a technical school or university. Contact your local AEYC affiliate for advice.

What kinds of jobs are there?
Men can serve in any capacity in early childhood education that women do. You can be a family day care provider, child care center teacher or director, Head Start teacher or driver, public school special education teacher or family educator, college or technical school instructor, university lab school teacher, and this list just begins to scratch the surface of possibilities.

What is it like being a man in early childhood?
The best way to get this question answered is to talk to some men in the field. You can contact men directly or seek men out at conferences, workshops, or events designed especially for men in early childhood programs like the annual retreat in Minnesota.

Who can I talk to to find out about it?
A good place to start is to contact your local affiliate office or local college's early childhood department for names of men willing to talk to other men about working in early childhood programs. If all else fails contact the authors of this handbook and we can provide you with at least one man in your area to talk to.

What kind of training and experience do I need to get started?
Basically you can get started without any training or experience. Most child care centers will give any man a try at being a sub if your references and background checks out. Once you sub for awhile part or full-time employment is often offered sooner or later. Child care teachers need varying levels of education and/or experience depending upon state rules. Higher paying jobs connected to public schools require bachelor's degrees in early childhood or elementary education and some require additional coursework such as in the case of an Early Childhood Special Education teacher. College instructors usually require at least a Master's degree and usually a Doctor's degree.

How can I earn enough money to support myself let alone a family?
There are no easy answers to this question. Child care salaries are still pitifully low. If you want to stay in child care as a teacher you have to give up the idea of making a good living. (There are exceptions to this like the Massachusetts subsidy plan.) Otherwise you have to eventually consider higher paying options like being a director, working for the public schools, or teaching at a college. Another alternative is extra work like working evenings as a child care worker for evening programs or giving after hours workshops. This involves working more than a regular work week and can quickly lead to burnout.

What age group of young children do men work best with?
Despite some misconceptions that men can only relate well with preschoolers or school-age children, men can also work well with infants and toddlers. Don't settle with an age group that does not seem right to you until you have tried a different age group.

At what age or stage in one's career is it best to get in the field?
There is no magical age here. It used to be that alot of men stumbled into early childhood work in their 20's or 30's after starting a different career and hating it. Now we see more adolescent men in the early childhood courses at technical schools and colleges. We are also seeing men in their 40's and 50's dropping an unsatisfactory career and getting in the field. And we are also seeing some retiring early or at regular times and beginning a new career in child care. If it feels like the right thing to do, then it is the right time for you.

What are the benefits of working with young children?
As stated before, talk to a man in the field and he will tell you how great it is and how tough it is. Tangible benefits are small. Pay is low and benefits are skimpy but if you find you love this work you will enjoy good physical and mental health. And the intangibles are too numerous to list here. Suffice to say that the involvement in the growth, the joys, the energy, the love of young children is a reward that has no price tag.

Men who want to remain in the field

How can I earn more money?
Unionizing often raises salaries and benefits. You can seek outside work in early childhood like giving workshops, teaching classes, or doing respite care. You can move up to higher paying jobs like being a director or working for the public schools.

Where can I get support from other men in the field?
Some parts of the country have organizations and/or events for men in early childhood programs. Contact your local AEYC affiliate or the authors of this handbook for more information. Seek out workshops at conferences that deal with issues about men and talk to the men there. Organize your own group if needed.

How many other men are out there?
Nobody knows for sure but the best estimates are that two to three percent of all people working in early childhood programs are men. What that means in actual numbers is anybody's guess. In Minnesota we have a mailing list of 200 men in the state and we know that it isn't comprehensive.

What do I do when discriminated against on the basis of being a male?
Usually a reasonable approach to a director and fellow staff will clear up any unfair rules, policies, or attitudes. It won't be easy. But, sexism needs to be interrupted. It's important to pick which issues you need to challenge. If you consider it serious enough, put it in writing so that you have documentation. Also, if necessary, you should contact your local human rights department with the city or state. Otherwise, contact your licensing agency if you feel that is necessary or take other legal action.

How do I handle accusations of abuse?
When in doubt always get advice from an attorney with expertise in defending against child abuse accusations. Don't let an inexperienced attorney practice with you as a client. See the chapter in this handbook on this subject.

How do I organize events and gatherings for men in early childhood programs?
A good place to start is to run a workshop or seminar at a local conference. If you get some men there plan a next event with those men and get it into local newsletters. Camping trips are easy, inexpensive, well-attended, and rewarding. Retreats can be held at church or other camps at a reasonable, break-even cost. Once you get a mailing list together from a workshop or seminar and begin, it is amazing how many other men find out about what you are doing. Start small. You don't have to get every man in your area to be effective.

How can I help get other men into this profession?
Organizing retreats, camping trips, etc. goes a long way in this matter. Let local affiliates and colleges that prospective men can contact you for advice.

How do I deal with burnout?
Again, organizing or taking part in some event for men in early childhood programs usually helps alot. Walk away for awhile. There will always be plenty of jobs for men available when you are ready to return. Try something different in the field. Move to a higher paying job. Take some classes to get a different job.

How do I deal with pressure from friends and family to get out of the field?
If you stay in long enough family members usually begin to leave you alone. The same holds true for some friends. Often you find that sooner or later those friends that annoy you about leaving the field end up becoming former friends if they annoy you long enough. If their questions bother you enough to have continuing doubts, maybe you should take a close look at what you are doing.

Directors of programs who want to hire men or keep the men they have

Where do I find qualified men?
Advertise at places where men can be found like at colleges, men's organizations, newsletters for men etc. Write newspaper ads that let men know that they are welcome to apply.

How can I support their being hired?
Count the fact that a candidate is a man as an asset just like if he had a special talent or is a person of color. Communicate the positives about hiring a man to your hiring committee, parents, community, and staff.

What will my parents, staff, and community say if I hire a man?
You need to be unapologetic and pro-active in communicating to everyone that hiring a man is a positive move for your program. Communicate the positives to new parents and staff and make it a fact that men are involved with your program.

Won't I have to change our policies and procedures if I hire a man?
If you discover that you have to change your policies and procedures if a man is hired, there are two major issues. One is that you may be setting yourself up for a discrimination suit if you make separate rules for men in your program. The other issue is that you may discover that there are many policy areas that need to be changed to protect or involve both men and women in an equal and positive way such as rules about no staff members being alone with children.

Why would a man want to work for such low pay?
Motives that men bring with them into your workplace are varied and overwhelmingly positive. Often they are men who have tried the "rat-race" and have decided that they want to have a much more healthy life and positive effect on children and society.

How can I support men in my program once they are hired?
Be positive in your communication to your parents, staff, and community about men. Men are usually working in isolation from other men and they may need extra direct support from their supervisors to feel they are doing a good job. A kind word can go a long way. When you come across a workshop, retreat, or other event for men in early childhood programs, do all that you can (even monetarily) to encourage your man or men to get involved.

Once I start hiring men, do I have to have a staff that is 50% men? Will they take over?
The highest estimate of the percentage of men in early childhood programs is four percent. With the low pay, societal taboos, and cultural bias that we have to deal with it is highly unlikely that men will ever take over the early childhood profession let alone a local center. You do up your odds that a man will stay awhile if you have more than one man on staff.

What kind of men want to work with young children? Aren't alot of them potential child abusers?
Stories in the media about men abusing children in child care centers make good copy but is realistically insignificant. In fact, since you are more likely to have an overwhelming majority of women on your staff, you are much more likely to have to deal with a female staff member abusing a child than your male staff.

Because of the low pay, won't men in early childhood program stay only a short time? Wouldn't it be easier to just not bother hiring a man in the first place?
Men leave programs or the profession for the same reasons women do: low pay, low status, stress, etc. The extra effort it takes to hire and keep a man is usually outweighed by the positive effect having a man around has on the children, parents, and other staff.

What should I say to men? I never know what to say?
It's probably easier to tell you what not to say. Don't say, "You're so special." or "It so nice to have a man around. You're not like all those other men." By saying these things you are somehow separating us from other men. We really aren't that different from other men. We have just developed an aspect of ourselves that any human could develop, given the right environment and support. And by the way, please don't assume we know how to fix the copy machine or like to lift all the heavy things in the building.

Chapter 4

One conclusion

by Bryan G. Nelson, RN

A group of children were in the dress-up area pretending to play hospital. The action was intense and each child was emphatic about what role he or she wanted, "I want to be the doctor," said one little girl. "I want to be the doctor," said one boy. Somehow, and I'm not certain why, another little boy said, "I'll be the nurse."

This type of exchange happens all the time where I work. They hold a particular interest for me. Not only do I work in the child care profession, but I am also a Registerd Nurse. The children call me Nurse Nelson (I think it has a nice ring to it). Perhaps this little boy heard my name and decided that he wanted to be like me. What a compliment. Then again, perhaps the boy just wanted to be the one who gives the shots this time.

Not all boys and girls are given the option to explore careers through play. There are many societal inhibitors that keep men and boys from the opportunity to even consider career choices. Some of the most liberal-minded parents still fall into the societal traps that turn boys away from caring roles. Boys are not encouraged to engage in dramatic play with dolls. The majority of TV children watch depict caring roles as something for women and girls and not for men and boys. The message is strong and clear: Men cannot be caring nor nurturing.

Yet, there is the other side of this scale. A more hopeful side. I know hundreds of men working with children these days. I see more men wanting a greater role in raising children. Despite what you hear, men do care about children. If you have any doubts, look through this handbook again. All the men who wrote in it, or have contacted Bruce and I over the years really care about children. We realize that by just being, just by working in child care we are saying, "Yes, I work with children. And, I love them." Each day at work, our presence shapes the future. The children we care for will have a model of a man nurturing children. An image that gives them the chance to be who they want to be and do what they want to do. Now *that's* a compliment.

Part 4

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Children's books depicting male teachers

Aseltine, L., Mueller, E., & Tait, N.
I'm Deaf and It's Okay, Niles, IL: Albert Whitman and Co., 1986. (Brian, 17, who wears a hearing aid, comes to elementary classroom to talk about his hearing impairment).

Coker, G.
Naptime, New York: Delacorte Books, 1978. (teacher loses his patience as he tries to settle down children for naptime).

Cowels, K.
What will I be? A wish book., Racine, WI, Golden Press. (career otions for men include becoming a librarian).

Crary, Elizabeth
I can't wait: A children's problem solving book., Seattle, WA: Parenting press, 1982. (Male teacher arbitrates children's dispute and also quietly talking to children).

DePaola, S.
Oliver Button is a sissy., New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1979.

Fassler, J.
Howie helps himself., Niles, Il: Albert Whitman & Co., 1975. (Male and female teacher working at quiet activities - male helps Howie learn to use his wheelchair).

Lasker, J.
Mothers can do anything., Niles, IL: Albert Whitman & Co., 1972. (Black female principal supervising white, male elementary teacher).

Levinson, I.
Peter learns to crochet. Stanford, CA: New Seed Press, 1973. (Male, Hispanic-American elementary teacher helping Peter learn to crochet).

Mack, B.
Jesse' dream skirt. Chapel Hill, NC, Lollipop Power, 1979. (A Black male teacher supports a preschool boy when he wants to dress up in a swirling skirt).

Manteau, M.
I like school. Racine, WI: Golden Press, 1980

Pellet, E., Osen, D. & May, M.
A man is...Walnut Creek, CA, Aardvark Media, Inc., 1974, (Male elementary teacher helping girl to learn to play autoharp).

Potter, D.
An everyday, every way citizen. Oklahoma City: The Economy Company, 1977. (Male elementary teacher helping children take down the flag).

Powers, M.
Our teacher's in a wheelchair. Niles, IL: Albert Whitman & co., 1986. (The life, in and out of the preschool classroom of Brian in a wheelchair is presented. Wonderful photographs).

Rockwell, A.
When we grow up. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981. (Male taecher is offered as a career option).

Rockwell, H.
My nursery school. New York: Greenwillow, 1976. (Male and female teaches working in a variety of preschool activities).

Rogers, F.
Going to day care. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1985. (Male and female preschool teachers working together).

Simon, N.
We remember Philip. Niles IL: Albert Whitman & Co., 1979, (An elementary school teacher cries in front of his class as a result of his son dying).

Surowiecki, S.
Joshua's Day. Chapel Hill, NC: Lollipop Power, 1972. (Male and female teachers working together in preschool).

Wandro, M. & Blank, J.
My daddy is a nurse. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1981. (In addition to Daddy being a male teacher, he could be a Black ballet dancer, or a librarian).

Weissman, J. (Photographs: David L.
Let's be friends. Overland Park, KS: Weisman Press, 1981. (Senior male working in a day care center).

Welber, R.
Goodbye, Hello. New York: Pantheon Books, 1974. (Preschooler reaching up to hold the hand of male teacher).

Welber, R.
The Winter wedding. New York: Pantheon Books, 1975. (Depicts a balding, middle age male teacher).

Wolde, G.
Betsy and the doctor. New York: Random House, 1978.

Wolde, G.
Betsy's first day at nursery school. New York: Random House, 1976. (Male and female teachers showing Betsy her new school).

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